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of West Hoboken, N. J.

7 Nov. 1892.



# INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS

OR

# CULTURE BY SELF-HELP

BY

ROBERT WATERS

AUTHOR OF

"LIFE OF WILLIAM COBBETT," "SHAKESPEARE AS PORTRAYED BY HIMSELF," ETC.

"*Life without literature is death.*"—VOLTAIRE.

NEW YORK

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# PREFACE.

Though these chapters have appeared in the periodical press, I do not think they are any the worse for that. Print enables an author to see his mistakes, and I have endeavored to correct mine in the first impression. Not that I think my work is now faultless; but I am sure it is in better shape than if it had never appeared in print before.

The work is addressed mainly to young persons ambitious of excellence in a literary, an academic or an oratorical career; it has no pretentions to instructing those who are experienced in this field. But when I say *young* persons, I mean those who are *young intellectually*, and I consider all those who are still striving for improvement, still growing in knowledge and ability, as belonging to that class. Only those who have stopped learning are old. I think with Goethe that he

> **Who has not won a name, and seeks not noble works,**
> **Belongs but to the elements:**
> **'Tis faith and service that secure individual life.**

When I first read the Essays of Lord Bacon, I found one which, I thought, appealed to me per-

sonally, and from which I derived more benefit than from any other essay I had so far read. So I think it is with every book that is of any value. There is something in it which appeals to every reader, which seems addressed to him individually; and my hope is that this little book will contain at least one chapter appealing or applying to every one that reads it, and affording him some light or guidance in his efforts towards a useful and honorable career. I have put into the work such things as I myself, in earlier years, would have profited by the knowledge of; and I trust it will not only save many a young man from the blunders I made myself, but show him the best methods to secure success. I may say here that the reader need not necessarily begin at the first chapter and read to the end; he may begin wherever he chooses, at any chapter whose caption attracts him; and by so doing he will probably go farther and fare better than if he attempt a regular and complete reading of the book.

For the privilege of printing these chapters in book-form, I herewith acknowledge my indebtedness to the editors of the periodicals in which they first appeared—to Dr. J. M. Buckley, D.D., Editor of the Christian Advocate; to Morris Phillips, Esq., Editor of the Home Journal; and to Miss Maria Bowen Chapin, Editor of Far and Near, a monthly paper published by the Critic Company.

R. W.

17 Troy Street, Jersey City Heights, N. J.
June 1st, 1892.

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# INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE HOMES AND HAUNTS OF GENIUS.

LEIGH HUNT used to go out of his way, even while very tired, in order to walk through Gold street, where Dryden had lived, and thus give himself "the shadow of a pleasant thought." "I can no more pass throngh Westminster without thinking of Milton," he says, "or the Borough without thinking of Chaucer and Shakespeare, or Gray's Inn without calling Bacon to mind, or Bloomsbury square without Steele and Akenside, than I can prefer bricks and mortar to wit and poetry, or not see a beauty upon them beyond architecture, in the splendor of the recollection." Many others, themselves men of eminence, have looked upon the homes of genius in a similar spirit. "It is a sort of gratification," says Richard Cobden, writing from Burns's birthplace to his brother Frederick, "which I am sure you can imagine, but which I cannot describe, to feel conscious of treading upon the same spot of earth,

of viewing the same surrounding objects, and of being sheltered by the same roof, as one who equally astonished and delighted the world."

There is perhaps no finer trait in the character of a young man than this interest in and regard for all that pertains to a great man; for it indicates a noble soul, capable of high things. Besides, something of the very air and spirit of a noble life are apt to be caught in contemplating the place and the surroundings of its origin. Histories may be read in houses, walls, streets, as well as in books; and I am inclined to think that most young men of generous nature, especially those who have devoted some time to the study of literature, would, under like circumstances, be inspired with feelings similar to those of Hunt and Cobden. "Superior souls," says Mr. Alger, "find nothing else in the universe so attractive as a superior soul." Even the ground they tread on, and the air they breathe, become consecrated to those who are familiar with their life and work.

There is a season, in the life of every young man who has enjoyed some degree of culture, when the men who have "astonished and delighted the world" exercise an irresistible fascination over him. Then the lives and works of the heroes of art and literature, their struggles and triumphs, are regarded with intense interest, and their words are quoted at every turn. Who has not known the young enthusiast brimful of Shakespeare, Scott, or Schiller? Who has not known the youthful admirer of Michael Angelo, of Hogarth, or Thorwaldsen ready to sacrifice everything to be able to visit the homes of these great geniuses! It is in this season that a visit to the home or birthplace of genius becomes a source not only of exquisite pleasure, but of the highest

culture. For the daily walks and common surroundings of finely-touched spirits speak to him in a "various language," and enable him to catch a glimpse of those secret springs of thought, those "obstinate questionings of sense and outward things," which were perhaps the inspiring causes of many a noble, many a grand conception. To see Europe, therefore, at such a life-season, is, to an American, as good as a liberal education; and happy is he who can accomplish it.

Well do I remember how I, too, used to dream of making this trip to Europe, and of seeing those ancient towns and cities consecrated by their association with genius, with the lives and works of men and women of whom I had often read, and whose writings were still the consolation and the joy of my leisure hours. The realization of this dream I considered the most desirable thing in the world, and lived in delightful anticipation of it. By the course of my reading I had become familiar with the haunts of Steele and Addison, of Dryden and Pope, of Johnson and Burke, of Lamb, Coleridge and Hood, and I longed to see them with my own eyes. I knew the schools they studied in, the streets they walked in, the houses they lived in, and the inns and coffee-houses they most frequently visited; in fact, that centre of all that is consecrated to genius, world-famous London, was as familiar to me as New York or Boston. I used to wander in imagination through Fleet street and the Strand, where Johnson and Savage walked all night for want of a bed; through the poet's corner in Westminster Abbey, where so many famous and beloved poets are now enshrined in marble effigies; through the halls of parliament, where Fox, Pitt, Burke and Sheridan so often shone in all the splendor of eloquence; through

the ill-omened and thick-walled Tower, where Raleigh, Surrey, and so many other gifted and heroic souls suffered for truth or liberty; through the rooms of the Boar's Head and the Mermaid Tavern, where Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Francis Beaumont were wont to have their merry meetings and their wit combats; and I imagined I saw these famous poets in their old smoky, candle-lit den, discussing poetry, art and politics over their flowing cups, and leaving behind them an intellectual air

> **Which alone**
> **Was able to make the next two companies**
> **Right witty.**

How swiftly and cheaply we can travel in imagination! how completely free from all annoying circumstances! and how pleasing and interesting everything looks to us! What a pleasant ride was that from London to Stratford, in an old-fashioned stage-coach, with jolly companions and a good-natured, garrulous old Jehu, who cracked his whip and blew his horn at every stopping-place! Every striking object on the road I marked as things on which the eye of Shakespeare might have rested; and stopped of course at Bucks, where he "took the humor of the constable in 'Much Ado About Nothing,' which is on the road from London to Stratford." After feasting my eyes on everything in that ancient little town of Stratford, in which the poet was born and bred, and in which he passed his declining years; after reverentially examining that sacred little cottage in Henley street, still carefully preserved, in which his youthful years were passed, and in which he must have learned, especially from his gentle mother, those lessons of filial love and devotion which

he subsequently turned to so good account, I strolled through the surrounding fields and forests, and, like Orlando, passed a golden day

**Chewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy.**

Then "a change came o'er the spirit of my dream," and I found myself in Paris, chasing all manner of fancies up and down those streets rendered famous by great historical events, and hallowed by the genius of Molière, Corneille, Racine, Bossuet, Voltaire and Fénélon. After wandering through the scenes of their greatest triumphs, and looking with reverence on those splendid temples in which their eloquence and genius were first displayed, I strolled into the less frequented streets, and found old houses with such inscriptions as these: "Ici naquit Molière;" "Voici la demeure de Lafontaine."

After this I sped away to Germany, that land of poetry and romance, where some of the most fascinating characters in history and literature have lived, and where some of the most romantic and tale-haunted spots on earth are situated; and here I saw, not only the grand scenery of the Rhine, with its historic castles and legendary towers, but Cologne with its narrow streets and marvellously beautiful cathedral, Mayence with its famous fortifications and its time-worn statues of Faust and Guttenberg, Weimar and Jena with their interesting memorials of Schiller and Goethe, and Leipsic with its many associations of Lessing and Richter. In all these places I saw in imagination not only the streets and houses in which these great men lived and moved, but the very rooms in which they studied, the books they used, the gardens in which they walked, and the convivial resorts in which they so fre-

quently "set the table on a roar." Among the students of the universities I conjured up a new generation of Lessings, Schillers, Koerners, Goethes and Richters, all animated by the fire of genius, sparkling with wit and humor, and brimful of the newest ideas on art, literature and science; and with these I passed such disputatious days and convivial nights that I subsequently exclaimed with Cowley:

> **We spent them not in toys, in lusts, or wine,**
> **But search of deep philosophy,**
> **Wit, eloquence and poesy;**
> **Arts which I loved; for they, my friends, were thine.**

While still young, I was fortunate enough, after ten years of hard, unremitting toil, to realize my dream to a certain extent. I crossed the great ocean; saw the homes of my ancestors; lived for months in London, Paris, Munich and Frankfort; roamed through the cities consecrated by the genius of Shakespeare, Burns, Molière, Kaulbach and Goethe; spoke with their countrymen in their native tongue, saw their plays performed and their pictures exhibited on their native soil, and eat and drank and talked with the people by whom they had been surrounded. When I came into the city of Frankfort I thought little of the circumstance that it was the historic city in which Charlemagne convened his councils, or in which the German emperors were crowned; I thought only of the fact that it was the home and birthplace of Germany's greatest poet, the city in which Goethe was born and bred, and in which his youth and early manhood were passed, and a hundred things in his life and writings came up at sight of the place. These are the streets and the scenes, thought I, with which the poet was familiar; these are the

houses, the squares, the gardens which his eyes rested on; this is the city in which he conceived and worked out so many marvellously beautiful productions; this is the country where Marguerite and Faust, Egmont and Clärchen, Wilhelm Meister and Mignon, and all the interesting characters of "Hermann and Dorothea" lived and had their being, and I imagined I saw their types among the people by whom I was surrounded. The recollection of the sayings and doings of these ever-living characters rendered every spot I trod on enchanted ground, and I now thought I could realize the truth of Goethe's own remarkable declaration:

> **He who the poet's speech would understand,**
> **Himself must go into the poet's land.**

What added, too, not a little to the fascination of the place was the fact that I found the house in which the poet was born and bred still standing just as he left it, with many of his manuscripts, pictures, drawings, books and articles of furniture still remaining therein and open to the inspection of strangers. What a thrill of pleasure the sight of these things gave me! Through the kindness of my lamented and ever-valued friend, Dr. Wittstock, I was invited to the annual dinner in commemoration of the poet's birthday, where I became a participant in the finest "feast of reason and flow of soul" I ever enjoyed, and heard the wittiest, most fascinating speaker I ever heard. I have forgotten his name (it was something like Konweg), but remember he was a Mayence physician, and that the dinner was at the "Englischen Hof," and presided over by Dr. Volger.

Schiller's birthplace I did not see, although I passed a week at Stuttgart, which is not far from Marbach, where the house in which he was born is still standing, with a

tablet over the door commemorating that event. "'Tis true, 'tis pity; and pity 'tis, 'tis true," I was within a mile of Marbach town, and could have seen where the gentle dramatic poet was born and where he passed his early years; but circumstances, or perhaps that feeling of indifference which is bred of much sight-seeing, prevented me from doing so, and I have ever since regretted that I did not avail myself of the opportunity.

Those places and objects which I did see, however, made such a favorable impression upon me that I still remember them with pleasure, and I am now glad that my youthful curiosity was to some extent gratified. For before settling down to the serious work of life, or becoming tied by business or family cares, it is good to see something of the great world, otherwise one is apt to hanker all his life after that which it is impossible to gratify.

I have always admired the English practice of sending the university student, after the completion of his studies, on a tour of the Continent, to see the most famous persons, places and things at his command, and to become acquainted with the habits and manners of the best society abroad. Lord Chesterfield's son, who had had such fine opportunities of this kind, I had often envied; and although I could not travel in the comfortable way in which this young gentleman travelled, nor enjoy half the advantages he enjoyed, I determined to see the Continent in the best way I could. I remembered that Goldsmith had travelled over a great part of France and Italy with nothing but his flute and his wits to aid him; and that Bayard Taylor had gone over a great part of Europe on foot, with nothing but his scanty earnings as a newspaper correspondent to sup-

port him; and I thought that, with a knowledge of three languages and skill in one of the mechanic arts, I might imitate their example without any apprehensions of failure. I had the youthful confidence of Wilhelm Meister, and, like him, thought that

> 'Tis in truth for wand'ring in it,
> That the world was made so wide!

After a long sojourn in England, I wandered into France, where I became a teacher of languages, and succeeded so well that, after a year's experience, I ventured into Germany in the same capacity, and found life so pleasant and my new profession so profitable that I remained almost as many years in Germany as I had at first intended to stay months. It was here that I learnt what teaching means, and what may be done in the way of study; and it was here that I first tasted the sweets of leisure and culture.

I had, before setting out on my travels, devoted some time to the study of the French and German languages, and had read something of the lives and writings of half a dozen well known French and German writers. Besides the plays of Racine, Molière and Corneille, I had read Fénélon's "Télémaque," Voltaire's "Charles XII.," Le Sage's "Gil Blas," and Bernardin de Saint Pierre's "Paul et Virginie." I knew something of the lives of Schiller and Goethe—especially through Carlyle's essays and his charming biography of Schiller—something of Jean Paul Richter, of Lessing and of Martin Luther; and with this marvellous stock of knowledge I considered myself equipped for any emergency. I had the buoyant confidence of youth, and, with such extensive accomplishments, I thought I could go far and see much. Moreover, I innocently imagined that a resi-

dence in the towns in which these great men had lived and labored, and a sight of the scenes on which their eyes had rested, would, somehow, influence my mind in such a way as to give me a tinge of the genius which characterized them, or a spark of the fire which animated them.

These were foolish feelings, no doubt; but they were those of a youth looking toward noble things; and if Macaulay was not ashamed of his early idolatry of Milton, nor of the fond feelings with which he would have tended on him had he been his contemporary, so need I not be ashamed of my early worship of literary heroes, nor of the dreams which I cherished concerning their lives, homes and haunts.

## CHAPTER II.

CHOOSING A PROFESSION—HOW MEN FIND OUT WHERE THEIR TALENT LIES.

MANY young persons are in an uncertain state of mind as to the nature and extent of their natural abilities, and on this account find it difficult to fix upon the profession or calling which they are to follow for life. This feeling is by no means unnatural; it is the struggle of youth toward manhood and maturity. Only prodigies know from the start what they are best able to do. The mental powers of every young person, no matter how situated, are in constant process of development, and it is only after a certain stage of this development that one can plainly see wherein his strength lies. Sometimes a man tries two or three professions before he comes to see which is his proper one, or the career for which he is best fitted. This happens not only with men of ordinary, but with men of extraordinary ability. Daniel Defoe was a trader, a soldier, a merchant, a secretary, a factory manager, a commissioner's accountant, an envoy, and what not, before he became an author, in which profession he had the greatest success because it was

that for which he had the greatest talent. And even in this profession he went on improving and developing his talent; for he wrote a cart-load of books before he wrote "Robinson Crusoe." Wilson the ornithologist went through a bitter experience in five different professions before he became a student of ornithology, in which he not only found the greatest happiness of his life, but rendered invaluable service to the science of natural history.

Sometimes a fortunate accident reveals the sphere wherein one can succeed. "Most men," says Saint Réal, "are like plants; they possess properties which chance discovers." A New York paper lately published an account of the career of six successful theatrical managers, all of whom came to their work by accidental circumstances. They saw their opportunity and took advantage of it. Let me mention one or two examples in other careers. Lord Erskine, the famous advocate, first entered the navy, in which he spent four years; but finding promotion not sufficiently rapid, he entered the army, in which he served for two or three years, when his regiment happened to be quartered in a town in which the assizes were held. Sauntering into court one day, he was invited to a seat on the bench by the presiding judge, who happened to know him; and, while listening to the pleaders at the bar, he was told that they were at the top of their profession. He began taking their measure, and he made up his mind that he could do at least as well as they did, and immediately began the study of law. The world knows the result. Erskine became the greatest forensic orator that Britain has known.

A man may be a born merchant, as well as a born poet or orator; and this, too, is sometimes discovered by accident. Mr. A. T. Stewart, the millionaire merchant, was educated for the church, which he left for the schoolmaster's desk, and, by the merest accident, found that his real talent fitted him for the shopkeeper's counter. "He greeted me cordially," says the Rev. John Miller, in The Independent, "and told me that he was designed for my profession; that what Greek and Latin he knew was for that purpose; that his early manhood had no other end in view; but that an old uncle had told him that a *'call'* was necessary, and had described it in such a way that he recognized he had received no such thing, and felt driven to the choice of the humbler and less interesting work of a professional schoolteacher. This it was that brought him to the States. His merchant's life was an afterthought. And I learned how this came. He had a small pittance above his expense. He lent it to a passenger, a young man whom he had known in Ireland, who was to be a merchant. Stewart's loan of seventy-eight dollars helped to set him up. And, in a small shop of the city of that day, he strove hard to succeed; but finding that he was about to fail, he persuaded his friend Stewart to quit his school-teaching and take the shop, as the only means of making sure his money. It was in this way that Stewart made the discovery of his gift as a merchant."

Jonas Chickering was originally a cabinet-maker. Happening to see a piano in a New England town, he felt a strong curiosity to ascertain the secret of its structure. "It was the only one in town," says

Mr. Endicott, "and so sadly out of tune as to be almost useless; but he closely inspected it, took it to pieces, discovered its defects, repaired it, and made it fit for use. This incident, trivial except as a mark of genius, had a decisive influence over his destiny. It begot a purpose in his heart to become something more than a journeyman cabinet-maker. In its result, it transformed him from a cabinet-maker into a distinguished manufacturer of pianos." He became a millionaire, and the owner and director of an establishment that turned out thirty pianos a week.

Most young men have little to do with the choice of the profession in which they find themselves. Their parents or guardians choose for them; and these often choose, not so much with a view to their fitness for the profession, as to its profitableness or prospective advantages. This is, of course, a matter of prime importance; but if inward peace and true profit are looked to, it will be found that a modest income in a congenial profession is preferable by far to the most brilliant pecuniary success in one of a contrary nature.

With those young men who have their professions thus chosen for them, one of two things happens: either they plod on for life in a mediocre way in the arena in which they are placed, or if they have talent, energy and character, they push forward to eminence in their profession, or in some other profession which they like better, and take their place among men of mark. A man of genius, no matter where placed, *grows* into fitness for his proper sphere. He cuts out a career for himself, in spite of all obstacles or opposition; while his companions jog on in the rut in which they were placed by others. The Hon.

Jonathan Chace, United States Senator from Rhode Island, displayed in his youth a great fondness for study and books, and one day he told his father that he was almost ready for college. "Jonathan," replied the old man, who was a money-making Quaker, "thou shalt go down to the machine-shop on Monday morning." And to the machine-shop he went, where he remained for many years before he broke loose, and worked his way up to that sphere of life for which his talents fitted him. He became one of the leading men in the Senate.

Mr. E. C. Stedman, in speaking of the facility with which Oliver Wendell Holmes composed his festive and society verses, says that "what one does easily is apt to be his forte." True; and I might add, that what one likes to do is apt to be his forte. Those scholars who take more willingly to one study than to another may find therein an indication where their talent lies. The wise Shakespeare says:

> **No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en;**
> **In brief, sir, study what you most affect.**

This, therefore, Inclination, is the safest guide to the path in which you are most likely to succeed. What a youth takes a fancy to he is likely to have a talent for; and if he perseveres in it and makes progress in it, his talent is confirmed. I know there are some persons who, because they take a fancy to a certain line of work, devote themselves to it without ever attaining any degree of excellence in it; but these are people who have more zeal than judgment, or more vanity than either. They are weak in some part of their mental make-up. You may be sure it is not so much the love of the work itself

that animates or attracts them as the material advantages or the honor and fame they expect to derive from it.

Now the true artist pursues his work without a thought of anything but excellence in the execution of it or the benefit to be conferred by it. Love of fame, "the last infirmity of noble minds," he may indeed possess; but no visions of rank or power ever formed the mainspring of the exertions of a man of genius, or supplied the inspiration by which he produced his work. Some may point to Dean Swift as an exception, but he was an exceptional man in many respects. Swift declared that all his endeavors to distinguish himself "were only to secure a great title and fortune, that he might be treated like a lord by those who had an opinion of his parts." This was his object at one time; but I am sure that when he was writing "Gulliver's Travels," or the "Tale of a Tub," his delight in his work and his keen anticipation of its effect were far stronger impelling powers than any anticipations of profit or power to be derived from it.

A youth of twelve years, who had played skilfully on the piano, once said to Mozart: "Herr Capellmeister, I should like to compose something; how shall I begin?" "Pooh, pooh," said the great composer, "you must wait." "But you began when you were younger than I am." "Yes, so I did," said he; "but I never asked anything about it. When one has the spirit of a composer, he writes because he can't help it."

There Mozart struck the keynote to genius. One who has the ability to accomplish something in art does not need to ask how to begin; nature teaches him how to begin. He takes to it because he can-

not help it, as naturally as a duck takes to water. It is his delight to do this thing and no other; and this he does for the sake of the work itself, not for what advantage he may get out of it. Even the practical philosopher, the investigator of natural phenomena, does not pursue his investigations for the sake of the honor or profit he may get out of them; nor even for the benefit of mankind, which is a noble motive in itself; but for the sake of knowing, of finding out, of discovering what was not known before: he investigates because he cannot help it. "That which stirs his pulse," says Mr. Huxley, "is the love of knowledge, and the joy of the discovery of those things sung by the old poets, the supreme delight of extending the realm of law and order ever farther towards the unattainable goals of the infinitely great and the infinitely small, between which our little race of life is run. . . . . Nothing great in science has ever been done by men, whatever their power, in whom the divine afflatus of the truthseeker was wanting."

This being the case, why should any young person be prevented from busying himself in any harmless way that amuses him? Why should he be told that it is useless or foolish? Let him alone; he is developing his talent, struggling toward light and knowledge; and when these come he will know what to do.

## CHAPTER III.

WHAT GENIUS IS—THE LATE DISCUSSION CONCERNING IT.

THERE has lately been carried on in our periodical press a remarkable discussion concerning the reality of genius, a discussion in which it was gravely questioned whether it is a thing that has an existence or not, or whether it is merely a name. This discussion was, I believe, started by Mr. Howells, the novelist, in one of his monthly utterances in Harper's Magazine, in which he expressed some radical notions not only concerning genius, but concerning the aims and methods of men of genius generally. Mr. Howells is a realist, and does not believe in any fiction except that which is copied directly from life; he is a worker, and does not believe in any inspiration except that of work. "There is no genius," he says; "there is only the mastery that comes to natural aptitude from the hardest study of any art or science."

Well, after all, there is nothing wonderful in this statement; it sounds very much like what has been said before. Is it any more remarkable than Carlyle's definition of genius as "an extraordinary faculty of taking pains," or John Foster's, "the power of lighting

one's own fire?" Hogarth said, "I know no such thing as genius: genius is nothing but labor and diligence." The truth is, all men of genius have been workers, hard workers, and have done what they have done mostly by work. But this alone would not have done it. There is something else required, without which all the labor in the world is in vain. How many workers, great workers, there have been in literature and art who have piled up mountains of books and pictures and poems, all of which, with their authors, have long since been forgotten! They failed to possess that one spark that keeps every work of art alive. They certainly had that "mastery that comes to natural aptitude from the hardest study of any art or science;" but they had nothing more. Go into any great library, and see what countless volumes of these great workers are buried in dust and oblivion. The proof of genius is the *living* spirit. "Talent is the god of the present; genius the god of ages," says Lebrun. Though time sweeps into oblivion myriads of works of all kinds, it is unable to destroy that which is animated by the fire of genius.

Genius and labor are co-workers, and indispensable to each other. Labor can do much without genius; genius can do nothing without labor. Labor alone produces inferior work; genius alone by no means the best. Genius is of divine, labor of human origin. Genius works unconsciously; labor consciously; and it is by the union of both that the best work is produced. Genius alone rows a boat with one oar; so does labor; neither can make much headway alone; but when both row together, the boat is driven forward in the most admirable manner.

Mr. E. C. Stedman, in the Princeton Review, goes over the whole ground, showing that men have believed from time immemorial that genius is a natural gift, an inborn faculty, developed by study and culture, and working in a sort of instinctive, unconscious way. The passage which he approvingly quotes from Edward Von Hartmann is, I think, about as good a statement of its nature as can be given: "Ordinary talent produces artificially by means of rational selection and combination, guided by æsthetic judgment. . . . It may accomplish something excellent, but can never attain to anything great, . . . nor produce an original work. . . . Everything is still done with conscious choice; there is wanting the divine frenzy, the vivifying breath of the unconscious. . . . Conscious combination may, in the course of time, be acquired by effort of the conscious will, by industry, perseverance and practice. The creations of genius are unwilled, passive conceptions; they do not come with the word, but quite unexpectedly, as if fallen from heaven, on journeys, in the theatre, in conversation, everywhere when it is least expected, always suddenly and instantaneously."

No sensible man will deny this; for no man ever produced a work of genius at will, or merely because he wanted to. It is true that it is only the working geniuses that become known; but it is not their working power that inspires them. It is their genius that inspires their working power. Works of genius are inspirations; but these inspirations come usually to those who have studied much, observed carefully, and practiced a good deal. They hardly ever come to lazy, indolent, careless people. Indeed, inspirations

are useless to all but the workers; for when an inspiration comes it must be warmly welcomed and instantly utilized, else it will perish like any other unregarded thought. James Watt hit upon the idea of his great invention, the missing link in the steam engine, suddenly while walking through a park on a Sunday morning; but this was preceded and succeeded by intense study, by constant labor and deep thought, without which his genius would never have amounted to much.

Not only does the conception come unsought, but the execution often runs in a line quite independent of the author. Walter Scott could not himself tell, when he began a story, how it would turn out. He was led by a sort of divine influence into the right path, and this influence is especially favorable to those who have diligence, perseverance, ambition. Genius is a spirit that has no sympathy with indolence and sloth. She may exhibit herself in a hundred ways in a hundred different characters; but never to the careless idler.

Furthermore, genius is the power of being able to see in common things what ordinary people cannot see in them; it is the power of being able to penetrate to the heart of men and things, and pluck out their mystery. This was Shakespeare's power, or one of his powers: he could see through men's words and looks into the inner workings of their hearts. Could any amount of labor, or of mere talent, procure him this power?

De Quincey makes a fine distinction between the works of genius and of talent. He says that all literature may be divided into two branches, the literature of *knowledge* and the literature of *power;* that the office of the former is to *teach*, and of the latter

to *move;* and that the former is bound, in the natural course of things, to fall into oblivion, while the latter will last as long as the language lasts. I think this is a true distinction. I know that I come into the former category myself; but I do not care; for no man can make himself a man of genius, and if I succeed in teaching something useful, I am satisfied. Oblivion overtakes us all finally. Let the reader call to mind those authors whose works have moved and elevated him, touched springs that have raised him to a higher level in life, and then compare them with those which have merely informed or instructed him, and he will perceive the justice of this distinction.

Max Nordau makes another distinction between genius and talent which will, I think, make the difference perfectly clear. I translate from his book entitled "Paradoxe:"

"What is talent? What is genius? The answer to this question consists usually of indefinite phrases, in which nouns that express admiration and adjectives that express laudation predominate. With such an answer we are not satisfied. We do not want complimentary phrases, but a plain, sober definition. Well, I do not think we are far from the truth when we say: That one having talent is a creature who can perform the common activities of life better than the majority of those who perform them, or who endeavor to learn how to perform them; and that a genius is a person who discovers new activities never practiced before, or who practices or performs old activities after a method quite peculiar to and original with himself. I purposely define talent as the attribute of a creature, and genius as the attribute of a person.

For talent does not seem to me to be limited to humanity. It is found also in the animal kingdom. A poodle that can be trained to perform cleverer tricks than any other dog has talent; also a robin or a blackbird that can sing better than his mates; perhaps even a pike that can hunt more successfully, or a fire-fly that can glow more brightly, than his comrades. Genius, on the other hand, is inconceivable among any beings except human beings, individual human beings. It is the attribute of that individual who, in popular language, breaks new paths, and discovers fields which were never trodden by any before him. That, as far as human observation goes, has never been done by a single animal." This definition has, to say the least, the merit of clearness, and, I think, of originality.

Schopenhauer, on the other hand, has a very curious conception of the value of works of genius. "Genius," says he, "produces no work of practical value. Music is composed; poetry is conceived; pictures are painted; but a work of genius is never a thing to use. Uselessness is its title of honor." Surely this must be intended in a Pickwickian sense. What! is a poem or a picture which touches our hearts, or gives us higher conceptions of life, of no practical value? This, it seems to me, is the highest and noblest of all values.

Now let me show by what a curious twist this word genius has come to its present meaning. Among the ancients every man was supposed to possess a dæmon, or inward guiding spirit, which he was bound to obey, or suffer irreparable loss. This was called his genius. Those who implicitly obeyed this spirit, or

genius, were the favorites of the gods, the prophetic souls who became the leaders and teachers of mankind. Hence nearly every man of uncommon intellectual power, ancient and modern, has attributed his best thoughts and best efforts to this spirit, or genius, this power beyond him, which inspires him to do or to say great things. And now, from being a spirit animating men and women, genius has come to mean a quality of mind possessed by them, and this quality, possessed to a certain extent by all men, is superabundantly great and active in a favored few.





## CHAPTER IV.

### INDICATIONS OF GENIUS.

I REMEMBER being struck by the remark of a French writer—I have forgotten his name—who declared that if, in reading a work of genius, one takes a deep interest in it, and feels in the reading of it some of the enthusiasm which the author must have felt in the writing of it, this is a proof that the reader possesses some of the spirit which created it, or a spirit similar to that of him who created it. This is, I think, a fair inference; it commends itself to the mind as a just conclusion; for every one naturally loves to associate with persons of his own cast of mind, and difference in degree is not difference in quality. "Tell me whom you admire," says Sainte Beuve, "and I will tell you what you are." Tell me what books you admire, and I will tell you what qualities of mind you possess; nay, what qualities of heart, too; for your predilections in this respect are sure indications of moral as well as of mental qualities. Dante's sarcastic answer to the Prince of Verona was, after all, nothing but the statement of a simple truth. The prince asked him how he could account for the fact that in the household of princes the fool

was in greater favor than the philosopher. "Similarity of mind," replied the poet, "is, the world over, the source of friendship."

When one of the common multitude happens to light upon a work of genius, he does not take that deep, abiding, affectionate interest in it which a kindred spirit takes in it. He does not, like such a spirit, fall in love with it; dote on it; dwell with rapture on its beauties; return again and again to it, and see new beauties in it every time. He does not let it sink into his mind, and cause his whole intellectual being to be suffused by it; he does not, like the kindred spirit, make it a seed-bed for a new crop of ideas. No; his interest is something like that with which a peasant regards a marble statue, a fine edifice, or a masterpiece of painting; he sees it, admires it in a way, and passes on without remembering it; or if he does remember it, it is simply to say that he has seen and admired it. It does not abide with him, nor have any perceptible influence on his life or thought. "How often I have been struck at observing," says John Foster, a shrewd observer of men, "that no effect at all is produced by the noblest works of genius on the habits of thought, the sentiment and talk of the generality of readers! Their mental tone becomes no deeper, no mellower; they are not equal to a fiddle, which improves by being repeatedly played upon."

When I was in London I was introduced to a young New Yorker, just arrived, who wished to see the remarkable places of the English metropolis. I took him to the Abbey, the Parliament Houses, the Royal Academy, the Bank, the Exchange, the Kensington

Gardens, and other places; and when he got through he exclaimed with an air of great satisfaction, "Now I can tell my friends in New York that I have seen these places!" That man was a fair sample of the multitude; in fact, he was more intelligent than most of the multitude; but he was decidedly lacking in genius. He had no proper appreciation of the works of genius; and I am sure he had as little appreciation of the speeches of Bright or Gladstone, or the pictures of Turner and Landseer, as he had of the splendid edifices in which they were delivered or exhibited.

Nobody esteems high-mindedness more keenly than the high-minded; and nobody esteems genius more highly than men of genius. None of the millions of Shakespeare's admirers have appreciated the poet so keenly and enthusiastically as Coleridge and Goethe, themselves among the greatest of poets.

Whenever you find a man who never praises anything or anybody but in very moderate terms, you may be sure that he himself is a man of moderate talents. Large appreciation and high admiration of excellence are generally indications of large powers and high talents in the appreciator or admirer.

The man who loves, therefore, to associate with men of genius, either personally or in their printed works; who dotes on their masterpieces, and feels some of the enthusiasm in reading them which the author must have felt in writing them—such a man gives, by this very circumstance, presumptive evidence that he possesses genius. Emerson loved and studied Plutarch more than any other author except one; and it is a significant fact that the portrait he drew of

the famous biographer might, according to Oliver W. Holmes, have been set down for his own.

"Then," somebody may say, "all those who appreciate Homer and Milton, Shakespeare and Scott, are men of genius." Well, so they are, to a certain extent; for I believe that every man who understands and appreciates a work of genius possesses some genius, some sparks of the divine fire. All these admirers of Homer and Milton, Shakespeare and Scott, who themselves produce nothing, have something of the spirit of these great masters; something that corresponds with or responds to what they find in their works. They find a picture of their minds in certain phases of their lives in these great masters; a reproduction of their own unexpressed thoughts, desires, longings, dreamings, and doubts, and they are delighted to see that others have thought, felt and dreamt such things as they have. What they are lacking in is the power of expression, the power of embodying their conceptions in some poetic or artistic form. Renan says somewhere, that "the finest thoughts are those which have never been expressed;" and perhaps these very admirers of the great masters have many such thoughts. That is just where genius comes into play; for only genius can give adequate expression to certain conceptions of the mind. Every man and woman, and especially every child, lives at times in a celestial region which few can describe; a region such as that in which St. Paul found himself when he was taken up to heaven in a vision, and which he found he could not describe when he came down. Charles Dickens often lived in such regions, which he has shadowed forth in the thoughts of Little

Nell and other characters. Shelley used to run up to an infant, put his ear close to its lips, and listen with the expectation of hearing the language of the spheres! Poor Shelley! he no doubt had sometimes thoughts and visions which even his genius was inadequate to express. For

> **Thought is deeper than all speech;**
> **Feeling deeper than all thought;**
> **Souls to souls can never teach**
> **What unto themselves was taught.**

Now this lack of power to produce on the part of the admirers of genius may not be inherent, but proceed from want of training, want of practice, want of special culture in a given direction. They have been compelled to devote their whole energies to the production of food, to the gaining of a living for themselves and others, and thus certain powers of their minds have lain dormant and inactive. The poor souls have thus been denied the possession of a faculty which they have simply been unable to develop. Not that they could, under any circumstances, have become Homers, Miltons, Shakespeares and Scotts; but they might possibly have done much finer work than they have done; they might possibly have equalled many clever men who have had greater advantages. The writer of this paper would certainly never have been able to write what he is now writing had he not in his youth been placed, accidentally or providentially, at the trade of a printer instead of that of a shoemaker or carpenter. At this trade he became familiar with the expression of thought, which he would not have done had he been made a shoemaker or carpenter. So with thousands of others. We are

all largely the creatures of circumstance. Individuals make the same experience as nations; for civilization did not begin until the Nile, by its fertilizing overflowings, caused the earth to produce spontaneously abundance of food, and thus afforded men *time* to think, study, write, build, and acquire that "mastery that comes to natural aptitude from the hardest study of any art or science."

I agree with Pope's famous dictum:

> **True wit is nature to advantage dressed;**
> **What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.**

Genius simply expresses what all men think, hope, or fear. And literary expression, like painting, sculpture, building, acting, drawing and so on, needs training as well as natural capacity. Indeed all these are merely different modes of expression, for the works of all artists are but efforts to give expression to conceptions of the mind. The painter, the sculptor, the architect, the actor, are all striving to embody in some shape their conceptions of beauty, of dignity, of grandeur, or of misery.

Listen to what the great master of expression says:

> **The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,**
> **Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;**
> **And, as imagination bodies forth**
> **The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen**
> **Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothings**
> **A local habitation and a name.**

So that it is he whose pen, chisel, or brush "bodies forth the forms of things unknown," conceptions of beauty, grandeur, or misery, that proves himself a man of genius. "Shakespeare's great and peculiar

genius," says Richard Grant White, "was not the genius of observation, of study, of cogitation, of labor; it was an intuitive, inborn knowledge of men and things in their elemental, eternal nature, and of their consequent relations, combined with an inborn faculty of expressing that knowledge such as has never been manifested in speech or writing by any other man known to history. And chiefly his genius lay *in that power of expression.* It is probable that many have approached him in his insight of man and nature; those who understand him and enjoy him must approach him in this respect more or less remotely, or they would neither understand nor enjoy him." But none have approached him in expression.

## CHAPTER V.

THE POWER OF EXPRESSION—NEWSPAPER READING.

TO me there is something profoundly sad in the early extinction of genius. I always think, on hearing of the early death of a man of genius, "What might not such a man have accomplished had he only lived!" and I go on imagining the great things he might have done. Few men of genius live long. The allotted years of the Psalmist are seldom allotted to them. The fire that is in them seems to burn them up sooner than that of other men; and, unhappily, some of them seem unaccountably intent upon making this fire burn as fiercely as possible. What might not Mirabeau, or Burns, or Byron, have accomplished had they only husbanded the taper of life, instead of burning it at both ends!

One of the most recent of these early extinctions is that of the late Professor E. R. Sill, a man of rare powers and estimable character, whose papers on art and literature in the Atlantic Monthly are among the best things that I have read in recent years. Take a sample of his quality—a sample which bears directly upon the subject in hand, expression:

"We pass along a picture gallery, or turn the leaves of a volume of verse. As we pass before some painting, or some poem, the question is, What does this give me? It may be that it gives the imagination some pretty image of nature. That is something. It may be that it gives the feeling also; some touch of suggested peace or tranquility. That is more. But if it be a great picture, or a great poem, the whole spirit in us is quickened to renewed life. Not only our sense of color and form, our perception of harmonious relations, but our interest in some crisis of human destiny, our thought concerning this, a hundred mingled streams of fancy and reflection and will impulse, are set flowing in us; because all this was present in the man of genius who produced the work, and because his expression of it there means the carrying of it over from his spirit into ours. If it be a work of the greatest rank, we are more, from that moment and forever. [Consider the weighty meaning of these words, and how strongly it illustrates the dignity of the artist's profession.] For out of the life the artist or poet has given us, will be born successive new accessions of life perpetually. The art of literature is the highest of the arts, because its power of expression is the greatest." The author of these words is dead; but his spirit, here and elsewhere, will live forever!

I have said that most men, the admirers of Homer and Milton, Shakespeare and Scott, possess *some* genius, *some* sparks of the divine fire. Most men, however, are not, unhappily, readers of classic literature. There are but few, comparatively, who read "the best that has been thought and said in the world." Mr. G. W.

Curtis is said to have lost a fortune in an endeavor to bring out a series of first-class books. There is no great demand for such books. They are not the popular books. Glance at the class of works sold at the railway and ferry stations, and see what wretched stuff most of them are. Every exciting, sensational tale, all those low and vulgar things that appeal to the passions; these are the things that the multitude buy. They don't want to think; they want to be saved from thinking. Stop the first hundred persons you meet in the street, and ask them if they have ever read any work by Homer or Milton, Shakespeare or Scott, and I will wager a hundred to one that three-fourths of them will be found ignorant of everything but their names. I said three-fourths; I am afraid it would be nearer nine-tenths. Of the one million people in New York city, which is the centre of intelligence in America, it would perhaps be a liberal calculation to say that one-tenth, *i. e.*, one hundred thousand persons, are readers of classic literature. Let us hope, however, that there are so many; for their influence is very great. These are they that have themselves *some* genius. These are Matthew Arnold's "remnant"—the choice spirits that lead the civilization of the world; the salt of every nation, who keep up its intellectual life, and prevent it from falling back into savagery. Cherishing those things that are good, noble and true, they believe rather in high thinking and poor living than in high living and poor thinking.

The masses seldom read anything but newspapers, and the greater the rubbish these newspapers contain the greater their circulation. Fill a newspaper with

tittle-tattle about the private lives of individuals, and you will soon have a circulation. Fill it with high thoughts and noble views of life, and ten to one but it will soon die.

Talk with the man who reads nothing but newspapers, and you will be sure to find him a man of scrappy, second-hand knowledge. He is "a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles," with no comprehensive knowledge of anything. Not only are his views superficial, his reasoning illogical, his information inaccurate and his conversation unedifying, but the entire man is of a common, earthy stamp, without any high ideal of life, without noble motives for living. "The reading of newspapers," says Dr. Buckley, "is not work, and he who reads nothing but newspapers will, in a few years, be incapable of intellectual work." Think of that, ye devourers of our encyclopedic daily newspapers, and profit by it. This is a strong assertion, made by a remarkable man; but it is fortified by others, made by equally remarkable men. "The whole world," says Mr. Freeman Clarke, "rushes to the newspaper every morning to find out what has happened since yesterday; and the moment it finds out what has happened, it cares no more about it. This is a mental dissipation which takes away mental earnestness, and destroys all hearty interest in truth. It weakens the memory; for the memory, like all other powers, is strengthened by exercise. We cultivate our memory by remembering. But if we read, not intending to remember what we read, but expecting to forget it, then we cultivate the habit of forgetting." And Mr. Clarke thinks the memory of the nation is permanently injured by this dissipation. Dr. Rush excluded

from the Public Library which he founded at Philadelphia all newspapers, declaring them to be "the repositories of disjointed thinking." There is a saying of Mr. Dick, the Scotch geologist, which sticks to me. One day a gentleman called upon Mr. Dick, and was told that he could not see him just then. "Tell Mr. Dick," said the gentleman, "that I am the editor of so and so." The reply was, "I have no time for editors;" and (aside), "They only thresh straw a thousand times threshed."

What, then, shall we not read the newspapers? By all means; but let us not confine ourselves to such reading. In the daily journals one should read the news, and that only, and form one's own opinions concerning it. That is what Mr. John Morley, who says himself that he has written more "leading articles" than any other man in England, recommended to an association of young men.

To be a man, one must take an interest in what is going on among men. This is current history, and is as well worth knowing as any other history. Wendell Phillips said that he who does not read the newspapers might as well live on an island all to himself, like Robinson Crusoe, for all the good he is. True; but if he reads nothing but newspapers, he might as well live on a dung-hill, where everybody carts his garbage, for all the good he gets.

The majority of men care as little about intellectual progress as the majority of children care about going to school. They want fun, not knowledge; and almost the only chance of getting knowledge into their heads is by mixing it up with fun. It is too much trouble for them to study. They cannot sacrifice their ease or pleasure for such a thing. This is why

everything is worked up in the shape of fiction nowadays; the pill must be sugar-coated to get it down.

How often I have seen young men lounging around in their places of business, doing nothing and thinking about nothing, when, if they cared for knowledge, they might have improved this precious time by learning something! How many thousands there are who have two or three hours each day at their disposal, and yet never apply the time to any useful thing! Most working people do the very same work, and talk in the very same way, at sixty, as they did at twenty. They can do only what they are told to do, or what they are compelled to do; they take no forward steps of their own volition. A certain amount of worldly wisdom they do indeed acquire; but no increase in power of performance, no increase in intellectual power. "Genius," says Coleridge, "is the faculty of growth." They don't grow; they stop when they get enough to live. I have just received a letter from a compositor who has been working for over thirty years at his trade; and yet this man, after setting up correct sentences all these years, writes me now, "I thought you was in Germany!" Even among professional men, this stand-still nature is often seen. "I have known preachers," says John Foster, "who seemed as if they had slept for twenty years, and then awoke with the same intellectual stock which they had before they began their nap."

One test of intellectual power is the sticking to a thing until you have mastered it. How few there are that stick to the study of a language, for instance, until they have learned it thoroughly! I have never heard of any American, except Bayard Taylor, who had

thoroughly mastered German. "The power of applying attention, steady and undissipated, to a single object," says Lord Chesterfield, "is the sure mark of a superior mind." Genius has been defined as the power of concentrating attention; more properly, it might be called the power of keeping attention concentrated on a subject until you know all about it. This is too much trouble for the ordinary man. Mr. Joseph Payne, in his excellent Lectures on Education, says: "The reason why savages remain savages is because they don't want to be civilized." How many savages of this kind we have in a civilized community!

## CHAPTER VI.

HOW INTELLECTUAL POWER IS ACQUIRED—INSTRUCTIVE EXAMPLES.

I KNOW no finer example of the difference between a youth of genius and an ordinary youth than that presented by the life of Thomas Holcroft, the actor and author. He was born in London in 1745 and died in that city in 1809. While still a mere child he had to undergo the most extreme suffering as a peddler and hawker, being obliged to tramp with his father and mother around the country, driving loaded asses from place to place, animals that were as hard-worked and tired as himself. In this occupation he endured hunger, exposure, nakedness, fatigue and all the humiliations of poverty. Happening, in his twelfth year, to witness the races at Nottingham, and to get a sight of the stable-boys who took care of the horses, he was so strongly impressed by the contrast between his own wretched and ragged condition and that of these well-fed and handsomely-dressed boys, that he resolved to try and become one of them. Accordingly he made application to several of the turfmen for a position, but was repeatedly refused. After many rude rebuffs he succeeded at last, and

secured a position under a kind master at Newmarket. He was not long in this service before he began to distinguish himself as a rider, and his master was well pleased with him. He now enjoyed what he never knew before, good food, comfortable lodging and handsome clothes. "I fed voluptuously," he says, "and not a prince on earth had half the appetite or a tenth of the relish I had for my meals. I was warmly clad, nay, gorgeously; for I had a handsome new livery, of which I was extremely proud, and never suspected there was disgrace in it. Instead of being obliged to drag through the dirt after the most sluggish, obstinate and despised of all our animals, I was mounted on the noblest animal that the earth contains, had him under my control, and was borne by him over hill and dale with the swiftness of the wind. Was not this a change such as might excite reflection even in the mind of a boy?"

With most boys this change would have excited elation, but little reflection. Now mark the difference between him and the other stable-boys who were his companions. In his leisure hours he read everything he could lay his hands on, and tried to learn all he could. He studied arithmetic, music, history, anything that offered a chance of improving his mind. After two years of this easy, luxurious jockey-life, he determined to quit it, for he had grown beyond it, and felt that he was capable of better things. "I finally became disgusted," he says, "with a life which offered none but material attractions, and determined to change it. I began to despise my companions for the grossness of their ideas, and for their total neglect of every pursuit in which the mind had any share; and they began

to despise me for the oddness of my pursuits and the little interest I took in theirs. My attempts to acquire some small portion of knowledge they regarded with sneers of contempt; and not one of them offered me any encouragement, either as prompter or rival."

Like many others, he had to "come out from among them," and walk his own way. Having grown beyond them, he could no longer endure their manner of living; and when he left them he entered a sphere far higher than that of their masters. He became a teacher, writer, translator, actor and dramatist; he spent his life in working out noble ideals; lived among the best spirits of his time, and produced some things which will keep his name fresh in remembrance for many a year to come.

How few young men act like him! Even among those who read, the great majority care for nothing but fiction. Now a love of fiction is no evidence of a desire for improvement. It is simply a craving for excitement, a desire for an easy and pleasing acquaintance with the wonderful adventures of other people. There is no exertion of the mind in such reading. It is all swallow and no effort; little better than devouring sweetmeats or drinking gin. A man who cares for nothing but stories has a mind like a bog, which swallows everything and returns nothing. He is the unprofitable servant who hides his talent in a napkin; he is too lazy to take it out and make use of it; all he cares for is tranquillity and ease.

"It is not talent that men lack," says Bulwer Lytton, "it is the will to labor; it is purpose, not the power to produce." Those who fail are mere *wishers;* those who succeed are *willers.* "The books that help us

most," says Theodore Parker, "are those that make us think most." Few novels have this power; only those of the masters have it. To him who reads nothing but novels, none of them have this power; he is never stirred into thought. He lives in the dreams of other people, and has none of his own.

It is by mental *work* that one acquires power: it is by making substantial acquirements in those studies that require exertion: in the mathematics, the languages, the sciences, history and general literature; it is in working out hard problems and mastering the principles of any art or science that the mind gains power. A fondness for work is one of the indications of genius. There never lived a man of genius who was not characterized by a love of study. Study is the very life of his soul, that by which he lives. "The few books that came within his reach," says Garfield, speaking of Lincoln, "he devoured with the divine hunger of genius."

This "divine hunger" I set down among the surest marks of genius. Except actual performance of work of superior character, there is no surer indication than this. It is the hidden germ struggling for light, life and expansion; and these it will reach, unless some untoward accident kill it. He who does not care for study proves by this very circumstance that he has no genius. He is made for other things. I have just read of a poor girl who, because she risked her life in saving a passenger train, was sent to a first-class school in Massachusetts, where for two years the best teachers tried to train and develop her intellect. All in vain. Having no taste for study, she was beyond their reach. She had no intellect to train. Some are born for the kitchen as surely as others are born for the cabinet. A woman

may be a heroine, and yet possess but a small share of intellectual power.

Wherever I find one eager and thirsting for knowledge, ambitious to excel and to make the most of his powers—wherever I find one who considers the world beautiful, interesting, and worth studying, always busy in observing the workings of nature, and in reflecting on what is going on around him, never for a moment finding time weary or thinking of such a thing as "killing time"—wherever I find one who, in the words of Milton, is "inflamed with the love of learning and the admiration of virtue, stirred up with high hopes of living to be a brave man and worthy citizen;" or, in the words of Byron, following

> **The noble aspirations of his youth,**
> **To make his own the minds of other men,**
> **The enlighteners of nations—**

I feel confident that such a man, whatever his station or parentage, possesses genius, and that nothing but time and opportunity are required to enable him to display it. His genius may, like a grain of mustard seed, be hardly perceptible at first; but, like the mustard seed, it will develop under a genial sky, and spread out larger than any other plant of the field.

We often hear people advising young men to seek the society of superior people, men of ability and culture. But it is of no use for them to seek such society if they do not feel any inclination for it; it is vain for them to seek it at the bidding of others. They would neither get nor give any benefit in such society. If the power is in them they will naturally gravitate toward such society, or draw it to them, just as a man of genius naturally gravitates toward those books that

contain "the best that has been thought and said in the world." For genius will aspire, will improve, will rise in spite of every obstacle. Study, thought, ideas, these are its life; and wherever men of culture and ideas come together, there it finds itself at home. *Das Gleiche kann nur vom Gleichen erkannt werden.* And if it fail at first, it will keep on until it succeeds. Lord Chesterfield, who became the type of a fine gentleman, tells how awkward, silent and shy he felt on first entering good society. After sitting dumb as a post for a long while, he plucked up courage enough to say to one of the noble ladies, "It is a fine day." "Yes, indeed it is," replied the lady, with a smile and a kindly look; and she went on conversing with him until he gradually lost his shyness and talked with ease. This was the beginning of the man who became the most polished and accomplished gentleman in Europe. Even Henry Ward Beecher, who, of all men, seemed to have most liberty before an audience, was timid and uneasy at times. "Many a time," says his wife, "when going to speak on a subject of special interest which I greatly desired to hear, he would say, 'Oh! don't go! I am sure I am going to fail, and I don't want you to be present.' For several years I yielded to such a request, and, anxious and troubled lest he should fail, awaited his return. But he invariably came home cheerful, and would say, 'I had great liberty; now I wish you had gone. The audience appeared greatly interested and very appreciative. They gave me great comfort and courage;' and he would appear happy and surprised. As I came to understand his moods better, I no longer feared any failure."

It is the same in other fields. "It is in me, and it

will out," said Sheridan, on failing in his first effort to make a speech. "You will not listen to me," said Benjamin d'Israeli to the House of Commons, on a similar occasion; "but the time will come when you *shall* listen to me." And each made his word good. Both these men of genius determined to go on studying and practicing until they succeeded. They knew that the power was in them; that success depended on themselves; and they were determined to leave nothing undone to secure it. Charles O'Connor said it would have made no difference what profession he had adopted; he would have attained about the same relative success in any profession. That is the feeling of every man of true genius.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DOES POVERTY SMOTHER GENIUS?

THE heroic soldier, Wolfe, thought so highly of Gray's "Elegy," that he declared he would rather be the author of it than the conqueror of Quebec; and Daniel Webster, on hearing the poem read to him on his death-bed, said he would willingly exchange his fame as an orator for that of the poet who composed the Elegy. Beautiful as this poem is; studded as it is with happy figures and natural sentiments, which appeal to the heart and mind of cultivated people more strongly perhaps than those of any other poem in our language; there is one passage in it which, as far as truth is concerned, is, in my opinion, of doubtful correctness:

**Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid**
**Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire—**
**Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,**
**Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:**

**But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,**
**Rich with the spoils of Time, did ne'er unroll;**
**Chill Penury repressed their noble rage**
**And froze the genial current of the soul.**

This "noble rage" is not so easily repressed. Penury alone will never extinguish the "celestial fire" of

genius. An unhappy stroke of fate may kill it; disease and death may annihilate it; but poverty, never. No man of genius, born a clod-hopper, ever passed seventy years hopping over clods. In whatever rank or station born, he is bound, if he live, to leave his mark on his age or country.

My assertion that those who have no genius do not care to study, do not care to learn, implies with equal force that those who have genius do always care to study, do always care to learn; and they generally succeed in making themselves known even under the most adverse circumstances. "A hero," says Kossuth, "is one who overcomes difficulties." So is a man of genius. Overcoming difficulties is the distinguishing mark of his character. If he has the "celestial fire" in him, he is bound to make it blaze and shed light and warmth on those around him. Take, for instance, the living artist, Mr. Daniel C. Beard, whose life I find thus described by a newspaper reporter:

"Mr. Beard has had a curious life experience. He was in his youth a raftsman on the Mississippi. During the war he was a soldier, and served at one time on the staff of General Sherman. When he began to put his ideas on canvas, it was in the rudest way. There was little art in this country then, and especially in Cincinnati, where he was a resident. He prepared his own canvas; he made his own brushes, going to a farmer's and selecting the hair for that purpose. He told me the other day that from the time he began, in this primitive way, to paint, he never received instruction of any kind from any one. 'In my work,' said he, 'I did like Topsy, I just growed.' Some of his paintings, especially the animal caricatures, are famous."

Of course he "growed," as all men of genius *grow*, who succeed in *living*. Yet it is probable that a man with wonderful powers of mind, suitable for extraordinary emergencies, may never bring his powers into play until these emergencies occur. Such, I suppose, was the genius of Grant and Marlborough. But this is not proven. Grant and Marlborough might have shown their powers in another field had they not become soldiers.

I know there have been many unsuccessful great men, many noble and brilliant geniuses, who have fared ill at the hands of Fate; but they were not suppressed by poverty. "Chill Penury" never froze the ardor of their souls.

Genius is a natural force which is bound to work as surely as grass grows or fire burns; but as the grass is sometimes burnt before it is grown, and the fire quenched before it is well lit, so are many noble spirits, by dire contending forces, often extinguished before they have well begun to live. "Some souls," says Richter, "fall from heaven like flowers; but ere the pure, fresh buds have had time to open, they are trodden in the dust of the earth, and lie soiled and crushed beneath the foul tread of some brutal hoof."

Some of the most brilliant men in history failed through circumstances beyond human control. Their history is simply an exemplification of the truth that the race is not always to the swift, nor the prize to the most worthy. Yet although they failed in the attainment of the objects they aimed at, their death simply cut them short in a career that would certainly have been glorious. Nay, it is often glorious as it is. They have left a brilliant example of heroic endeavor,

"footprints which perhaps another" has observed with allurement and stimulus; and they have not lived in vain.

Raleigh was unsuccessful; but he left a name that will forever be associated with heroic endeavor and noble character. Kossuth was unsuccessful; but who will say that his patient and high-spirited career, his brilliant oratory and steadfast conduct, have been fruitless? O'Connell was unsuccessful; but who has left a more brilliant name as an orator, and a nobler name as a patriot and liberator?

Even disease and "that fell sergeant Death" do not always conquer genius. The historian Green, though he knew that death would overtake him in a few weeks or months, kept on working until he completed what he had undertaken. Never was there a more striking example of the superiority of mind over body than in the case of this heroic spirit. His wife tells us that when he knew all hope was vain, and that death was a matter of a few weeks or months, he made up his mind to do his utmost to complete one of his histories before laying down his pen forever. "The way of success was closed," says Mrs. Green; "the way of courageous effort still lay open. Touched with the spirit of that impassioned patriotism which animated all his powers, he believed that before he died some faithful work might be accomplished for those who should come after him; and at the moment of his greatest bodily weakness, when fear had deepened into the conviction that he had scarcely a few weeks to live, his decision was made. The old plans for work were taken out, and from these a new scheme was rapidly drawn up, in such a form that, if strength

lasted, it might be wrought into a continuous narrative; while, if life failed, some finished part of it might be embodied in the earlier history. Thus, under the shadow of death, the 'Making of England' was begun, and during the five months in which it was written that shadow never lifted." Who will say that death conquered this indomitable spirit? Such an achievement, greater than any triumph of genius, covers its author with imperishable glory.

Genius is never lost: it will out, under the most adverse circumstances, even among the poorest, least cultivated people. I shall, in the next chapter, give you some examples of men in the very humblest station of life—the station which Gray had in view when he wrote his Elegy—examples of men who, in spite of the most complete poverty, in spite of apparently insurmountable difficulties, succeeded in "unrolling the page of knowledge," in developing and giving vent to their genius, and in pushing their way up to eminence and fame. I might give you a hundred such examples; nothing could be easier; but two or three will suffice for my purpose. Samuel Smiles's books are full of them; in fact, Smiles is the Plutarch of poor men of genius. His works are more encouraging to struggling genius than those of any other author that I know.

**True genius hath electric power**
**Which earth can never tame:**
**Bright suns may scorch, and dark clouds lower,**
**But never quench th' immortal flame.**

## CHAPTER VIII.

EXAMPLES OF GENIUS OVERCOMING DIFFICULTY.

JOHN BROWN of Haddington, was born at Carpow, Scotland, in 1722. Losing both his parents at eleven years of age, he became assistant to a venerable shepherd named Ogilvie, who tended his flock on the neighboring hills. The boy showed a strong inclination for study, and Ogilvie encouraged him in his efforts to learn. While minding his flock, the young shepherd not only mastered the Greek and Latin languages, but acquired such large stores of knowledge in various branches, that the country people round about looked upon him as a young Doctor Faustus, in league with the devil. Besides vast stores of Calvinistic divinity and Biblical history, he acquired a knowledge of nine or ten languages, classical, Oriental, and modern; of which knowledge, as we shall see, he subsequently made good use. Weary of the monotony of shepherd-life, and wishing to see the world, he became a peddler, and tramped over the whole country; then a soldier, and fought in the Rebellion of 1745; then a schoolmaster, and studied divinity and general literature while teaching the humanities; then a clergyman, and wrote a famous book, *The Self-Interpreting Bible*, while earnestly performing the duties of his sacred office.

As a preacher and writer, Brown became one of the most popular men in Scotland; and as a man, one of the most highly esteemed and sincerely loved. One story about him, which I heard when I was a very little boy, made an indellible impression on my mind. While still employed as a shepherd laddie, he had walked to St. Andrews, a distance of twenty miles, in his shepherd-dress, to buy a Greek Testament. He had been tramping all night, and doubtless looked somewhat rough and unkempt on entering the bookseller's shop. The bookseller, surprised at being asked for such a book by such a customer, began to make sport of him. Fortunately, one of the college professors entered the shop at this moment, and the bookseller mentioned the strange request of the shepherd lad. Equally incredulous of the boy's acquirements, the professor said to him, "Now, if you will read a verse of that Testament, and translate it to me, you shall have the book for nothing." The shepherd laddie took it up, read off and translated several verses with ease, and carried off his Greek Testament in triumph!

Valentine Duval was born in Champagne, France, in 1695. Losing his father at ten years of age, he earned a scanty living by herding geese and pulling weeds; then, when this failed, he determined to travel in search of employment. The only thing he knew of geography was that the sun rises in the east; and, imagining that the farther east he went the nearer to the sun he would come, and the warmer he would feel, he travelled steadily eastward. After walking for about one hundred and fifty miles, he came to the foot of the Vosges mountains, where he made the

acquaintance of a farmer, who gave him his flocks to keep. Then, after a time, he pushed on, still eastward; and finding himself, toward the approach of night, in the middle of an unknown forest, he kept on till he came near the outskirts of the same, when, fortunately, he espied a little hut, which he found occupied by a hermit. This man, who had been a priest, perceiving the boy to be bright and intelligent, offered to teach him to read and write, if he would stay with him. Valentine accepted the offer, and, after two or three months, found he had learned as much as his master could teach him. Then he went forward again, still eastward, and coming to a monastery in Lorraine, in which he had heard Learning had taken up her abode, he applied for admission as a servant. The monks received him joyfully, and he contracted with them to herd sheep a certain number of hours every day in reward for food and clothing. When off duty, he hunted for wild cats and other fur-bearing animals in the mountains; skinned his prey; carried the skins to a neighboring town, where he sold them, and bought books with the proceeds. I fancy I see him, coming in, like a wild man of the woods, laden with skins; and going off, like a man who had found a treasure, laden with books! This is what the "divine hunger" impelled him to do.

One day, while herding his sheep on the hills, he spread out a map of the world on the grass; and was leaning over it, trying to find out some spot of particular interest, when a gentleman approached, looked at him with surprise, and asked him what he was doing. "Why, you see what I am doing; I am

studying geography." "What place are you looking for?" "I am looking for Quebec, where I hear there is a fine university." "Oh, there are universities nearer hand than Quebec. Here it is." "What university do you refer to?" "There is one in Strasbourg, for instance." Then the two got into a familiar chat about literature and kindred subjects; and by and by Valentine noticed that several other gentlemen had come up, and were listening with respectful attention to the words of his new acquaintance. He perceived, too, from the deferential manner in which these gentlemen addressed him, that he was a personage of rank; and at last discovered that he was the prince of that country, Lorraine. Valentine wanted to beg pardon for the familiarity with which he had addressed him; but the prince laughed, told him he liked his way of talking, and by his familiar and pleasant manner soon put him at his ease. This excellent prince took him in charge; settled his contract with the monks; sent him to school and to college; made him his librarian; travelled over Europe with him, and subsequently made him a college professor and keeper of the imperial medals at Vienna. Duval became a successful teacher and the author of several useful works.

The following paragraphs are from Miss Frances E. Cooke's admirable short biography of Theodore Parker, who was born at Lexington, Mass., in 1810:

"A country boy leaving school when he was eight years old! Theodore Parker was this boy. How could he ever hope to become a great man? We shall see how he managed to carry out his wish. . . . . Each winter for three months, there was little work to

be done on the farm. Then Theodore could go to school again. So through fierce snow-storms and biting winds he crossed the fields each day, and was always the best scholar in the Lexington school. When spring came, and he had to go back to work, the schoolmaster offered to lend him books, that he might study whenever he could. To this man, whose name is White, Theodore owed much, and he never forgot the debt. Dearly he loved the memory of this friend of his youth, and it was one of the happiest deeds of his life to be able, in later years, to help the orphan children of the man who had so greatly influenced his own boyhood.

"So, in spring days, the farmer boy, as he guided his plough, said over to himself the lessons he had learned during the winter months at school, and when other workers lay sleeping during dinner-time under the shade of the trees, he read page after page of his schoolmaster's books, and learned new lessons. No odd moments were wasted. Early in the summer morning, and when the work was finished in the evening, Theodore found time to read, and his father often marvelled at the number of books he knew all about, of which he could give a clear account when asked.

"But there was one book he could not borrow, and this he must have. It was a Latin dictionary. In some way he must get together money enough to buy it. But he would not ask his hard-working father for the money. What could he do? A bright thought came to his mind. Ripe whortleberries hung upon the bushes in the fields. These he might gather and sell, if he could only find time to do so. So, very early in the morning, before the sun had fairly risen, and while the heavy dew lay upon the grass and hedgerows, he

sprang out of bed, and was out in the meadows, gathering berries, while other people still lay resting after the hard work of the previous day. In this way, Theodore gathered many bushels of whortleberries, which he sent to the Boston market, and yet he was able to begin his day's work when his father's workers came out on the farm. That Latin dictionary, when he got it, amply rewarded him for his toil; for it was a precious book to him. It was the first book he had earned for himself, and the first book of the large library which he afterward, by degrees, gathered round him. Those hopeful days were, in later life, very pleasant days to look back upon, and while they lasted there was no happier boy in all that country-side than the youngest son of the millwright of Lexington."

One day Theodore asked his father for a holiday. He would not tell any one what it was for; but his father knew he would make good use of it, and willingly granted it. Theodore rose very early that morning—it was in August—and walked along the dusty road to Boston, ten miles off, which he reached before the great heat of the day began. Not far from Boston is a long, red, brick building, with open fields and a long avenue of trees before it, called Harvard College. Here Theodore entered; presented himself as a candidate for admission; was placed among the other candidates; and, at the close of the day, when the examination was over, he was declared successful. With a light heart he made his way home again; and when, late in the evening, he told his father what he had done, the old man exclaimed, "Well done, my boy! But, Theodore, I cannot afford to keep you there!" "True,

father," replied Theodore, "I am not going to study there; I shall study at home, at odd times, and thus prepare myself for a final examination, which will give me a diploma." This he did: he not only studied at home, but taught school in a village near home; and when he got money enough he entered the college, where he studied for a little over two years, and obtained his diploma.

Harvard has turned out many a fine scholar, many an accomplished man, before and since; but few among them have attained greater distinction, or filled a larger place in the hearts of their countrymen, than this poor, professorless student of hers. Parker became one of the most eloquent preachers and powerful political leaders of his day, a fearless pleader for right and justice, and the trusted friend and adviser of such men as Seward, Chase, Sumner, Hale, Banks, Garrison, Horace Mann, and Wendell Phillips. He led a life of spotless purity, of defiant, fearless devotion to principle, and contributed as much, perhaps, as any man of his time in furthering that great cause which finally resulted in the emancipation of the negro and in the rewelding of our great American union.

As to William Cobbett, he may be allowed to speak for himself. Cobbett is the most autobiographical of writers, and I cannot do better than let him tell his own story. He was born in 1765, at Farnham, England, where his father cultivated a small farm. "At eleven years of age," he says, "my employment was clipping of box-edgings and weeding beds of flowers in the garden of the Bishop of Winchester at the Castle of Farnham. I had always been fond of beautiful gardens; and a gar-

dener, who had just come from the King's gardens at Kew, gave me such a description of them as made me instantly resolve to work in those gardens. The next morning, without saying a word to any one, off I set, with no clothes except those upon my back, and with thirteen half-pence in my pocket. I found that I must go to Richmond, and I accordingly went on from place to place, inquiring my way thither. A long day—it was in June—brought me to Richmond in the afternoon. Two pennyworth of bread and cheese and a pennyworth of small beer, which I had on the road, and one-half penny that I had lost somehow or other, left threepence in my pocket. With this for my whole fortune, I was trudging through Richmond in my blue smock-frock, and my red garters tied under my knees, when, staring about me, my eyes fell upon a little book in a bookseller's window, on the outside of which was written, 'THE TALE OF A TUB, price 3d.' The title was so odd that my curiosity was excited. I had the threepence, but then I could not have any supper. In I went, and got the little book, which I was so impatient to read that I got over into a field at the upper corner of Kew Gardens, where there stood a haystack. On the shady side of this I sat down to read. The book was so different from anything I had ever read before—it was something so new to my mind—that, though I could not understand some parts of it, it delighted me beyond description, and it produced what I have always considered a sort of birth of intellect. I read on until it was dark, without any thought of supper or bed. When I could see no

longer, I put my little book into my pocket, and tumbled down by the side of the stack, where I slept till the birds in Kew Gardens awakened me in the morning, when I started off to Kew, reading my little book. The singularity of my dress, the simplicity of my manner, my lively and confident air, and doubtless his own compassion besides, induced the gardener—who was a Scotchman, I remember—to give me victuals, find me lodging, and set me to work; and it was during the period that I was at Kew, that George IV. and two of his brothers, happening to come by while I was sweeping the grass plot round the foot of the pagoda, laughed at the oddness of my dress. The gardener, seeing me fond of books, lent me some gardening books to read; but these I could not relish after my 'Tale of a Tub,' which I carried about with me wherever I went; and when I, at about twenty-four years old, lost it in a box that fell overboard in the Bay of Fundy, in North America, the loss gave me greater pain than I have ever felt at losing thousands of pounds."

Cobbett followed the plough till he was nineteen years old, when he ran away to London, where he spent eight or nine months as a law-copying clerk, and then enlisted in an infantry regiment. While undergoing his drilling, during the first year at Chatham, he subscribed to a circulating library, read every book in it—novels, plays, history, poetry—and then set himself to study grammar, which he learned under the following circumstances:

"I learned grammar when I was a private soldier on the pay of sixpence a day. The edge of my

berth, or that of the guard-bed, was my seat to study in; my knapsack was my book-case; a bit of board lying on my lap was my writing-table; and the task did not demand anything like a year of my life. I had no money to purchase candle or oil; in winter, it was rarely that I could get any evening-light but that of the fire, and only my turn even of that. To buy a pen or a sheet of paper, I was compelled to forego some portion of my food, though in a state of half starvation. I had no moment of time that I could call my own; and I had to read and write amidst the talking, laughing, singing, whistling, and bawling of at least half-a-score of the most thoughtless of men, and that, too, in the hours of their freedom from all control. Think not lightly of the *farthing* I had to give, now and then, for pen, ink or paper. That farthing was, alas! a great sum to me. I was as tall as I am now, and I had great health and great exercise. The whole of the money, not expended for us at market, was *twopence a week* for each man. I remember, and well I may! that upon one occasion, I had, after all absolutely necessary expenses, on a Friday, made shift to have a half-penny in reserve, which I had destined for the purchase of a red-herring in the morning; but when I pulled off my clothes at night, so hungry then as to be hardly able to endure life, I found that I had lost my half-penny. I buried my head under the miserable sheet and rug, and cried like a child!"

Could there be a more striking example of Genius overcoming Difficulty?

On leaving the army, he married; went over to France; studied the language, literature, and habits

of the French people; emigrated to the United States (1792); became a teacher of English to French emigrés; a political pamphleteer; an editor and "offensive partisan;" then returned to England (1800), where he was kindly received by certain political leaders; dined with Mr. Pitt, Mr. Wyndham, Mr. Canning, and others; and then visited his native place, which visit he thus graphically describes:

"When I returned to England in 1800, after an absence from the country parts of sixteen years, the trees, the hedges, even the parks and woods, seemed so small! It made me laugh to hear little gutters that I could jump over called *rivers*. The Thames was but a creek! But when, about a month after my arrival in London, I went to Farnham, the place of my birth, what was my surprise! Everything was become so pitifully small! I had to cross, in my post-chaise, the long and dreary heath of Bagshot; then, at the end of it, to mount a hill called Hungry Hill; and from that hill I knew I should look down into the beautiful and fertile vale of Farnham. My heart fluttered with impatience, mixed with a sort of fear, to see all the scenes of my childhood; for I had learnt before of the death of my father and mother. There is a hill, not far from the town, called Crooksbury Hill, which rises up out of the plain, in the form of a cone, and is planted with Scotch fir-trees. Here I used to take the eggs and young ones of crows and magpies. This hill was a famous object in the neighborhood. It served as the superlative degree of height. 'As high as Crooksbury Hill' meant with us the utmost degree of height. Therefore, the first object my eyes sought was this

hill. I could not believe my eyes! Literally speaking, I for a moment thought the famous hill removed, and a little heap put in its stead; for I had seen in New Brunswick a single rock, or hill of solid rock, ten times as big and four times as high. The post-boy, going down the hill, and not a bad road, whisked me in a few minutes to the Bush Inn, from the garden of which I could see the prodigious sand-hill where I had begun my gardening works. What a nothing! But now came rushing into my mind, all at once, my pretty little garden, my little blue smock-frock, my little nailed shoes, my pretty pigeons that I used to feed out of my hands, and the last kind words and tears of my gentle and tender-hearted and affectionate mother! I hastened back into the room. If I had looked a moment longer I should have dropped. When I came to reflect, what a change! What scenes I had gone through! How altered my state! I had dined the day before at the Secretary of State's, in company with Mr. Pitt, and had been waited upon by men in gaudy liveries! I had had nobody to assist me in the world; no teacher of any sort, nobody to shelter me from the consequences of bad, and no one to counsel me to good behavior. I felt proud. The distinctions of rank, birth, and wealth, all became nothing in my eyes; and from that moment—less than a month after my arrival in England—I resolved never to bend before them."

Such were the facilities for acquiring knowledge, such was the manner of study, and such was the success of this famous writer, the man who became so great a master in English prose composition, the possessor of a style so charming, so pure, elegant and forcible, that he ranks with Swift, Defoe, and Bunyan, and his wri-

tings are considered worthy of study as a model of style. Cobbett became a great editor, a famous reformer and controversalist, a member of Parliament, and the author of many valuable books on political, educational, agricultural and social subjects.

Will the reader allow me to cite one more example? Just listen to the account which Vice-President Henry Wilson gives to his townsmen of the difficulties he overcame and the hardships he endured in his youth:

"I first saw the light here in your county of Stafford. I was born in poverty. Want sat by my cradle. I know what it is to ask a mother for bread when she has none to give. I left my home at ten years of age, and served an apprenticeship of eleven years, receiving a month's schooling each year, and at the end of eleven years of hard work a yoke of oxen and six sheep, which brought me eighty-four dollars. I never spent the sum of one dollar for pleasure, counting every penny from the time I was born till I was twenty-one years of age. I know what it is to travel weary miles and ask my fellow men to give me leave to toil. I remember in October, 1833, I walked into your village from my native town, went through your mills seeking employment. If anybody had offered me nine dollars a month I should have accepted it gladly. I went to Salem Falls; I went to Dover; I went to Newmarket and tried to get work; all without success, and returned home footsore and weary, but not discouraged. I put my pack on my back and walked to the town in which I now live in Massachusetts, and learned a mechanic's trade. . . . In the first month after I was twenty-one years of age, I went into the woods, drove a team, and cut mill logs. I rose in the morning before daylight and

worked hard till after dark, and received the magnificent sum of six dollars! Each of those dollars looked as large to me as the moon looks to-night."

Thus I think I have shown, pretty conclusively, that genius is neither smothered by poverty nor killed by difficulties, and that those who possess it will rise and make themselves known in spite of every obstacle.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE SECRET OF LITERARY SUCCESS.

SOME writers on education make statements which are rather discouraging to those young people who are endeavoring to make progress by their own exertions. Mr. Smiles speaks of Dr. Burney learning French and Italian while travelling on horseback from one musical pupil to another; of Kirke White learning Greek while walking to and from a lawyer's office; of a boy learning Latin and French while carrying messages in the streets of Manchester; and of Elihu Burritt learning forty languages while earning his living as a blacksmith.

Now this is all nonsense. These persons may, in that way, have got a smattering of these languages, and succeeded, perhaps, with the aid of a dictionary, in making out a passage or two in a French or Italian, Greek or Latin book; but they never learned to read, write, or speak these languages, with any degree of correctness, in that way. The knowledge of a language does not depend on the learning of mere words and phrases; that is, in fact, the smallest part of the business. A proper comprehension of the structure of the sentence is the main thing; and for this and a

fair knowledge of the grammatical forms, the closest thought and the most careful attention are necessary. Memory is by no means the chief faculty employed; for the advantages gained in learning a language do not consist in the ability to repeat passages by heart, or to ask a waiter for some foreign dish, but in the power to comprehend principles—and these throw light on the structure of the native tongue as well as on that of the one studied—in the ability to express thought logically and in conformity with the laws on which the language is based. This requires more understanding than memory, more knowledge of principles than of words. That is why Cobbett's French Grammar is so much better than the collections of words and rules that usually go under the name of French grammars.

Nothing, therefore, but steady and undivided attention can enable one to master a foreign language. All this "Latin without a Master," and "Greek in Six Weeks," is the merest catchpenny humbug. One must read and translate hundreds of pages from the foreign into the native, and from the native into the foreign tongue, before one can use either correctly. I know of only three Germans in the United States who have mastered English: I mean Mr. Carl Schurz, the late Professor Schem, and John B. Stallo of Ohio; and of only one American who has mastered German, Mr. Bayard Taylor. The rest are mere smatterers, who have learned just enough "to get along;" and this is all they wanted to do. I defy the best of the native Germans to write down on demand ten consecutive English sentences without a blunder. I defy the best of them to make a ten-minute speech, and let a reporter take it down word for word, without making

a laughing-stock of himself. It is easy to get a smattering of a language; it is easy to ask for meat and drink, to inquire one's way, to buy and sell, and employ the ordinary phrases about one's health and the weather; all this Sauveur business is very easy; but it is hard, very hard, and requires the closest study, to master a language, to become capable of using it correctly in expressing thought. I learned German so as to pass for a German among Germans, but it took me almost my entire time and my undivided attention for a whole year to do it; and even now I should hardly venture to write anything in that language for the press without having it looked over by a native. "The growth of what is excellent is slow," says Cowper; and nothing excellent is ever acquired very easily. "Some will never learn anything because they understand everything too soon," says another writer. I remember reading of an actor who succeeded, in a case of extreme necessity, in cramming the chief role of a comedy into his memory in a few hours, and then successfully playing the part at night; but he said he forgot the whole thing in about as short a time as he had learned it. And that is precisely the case with those who learn, or rather cram, a language into their heads in a few weeks or months. Knowledge of every kind grows like a plant, and anything of a mushroom growth is sure to be worthless. Every sensible teacher will tell you that one language well learned is better than a smattering of twenty. For in the proper learning of one language you get a training of the mind, an increase of mental power, which is never gotten by smatterings. Never mind what the precocities and the prodigies do; the slow learning of a plain man will last

you longer and be far more serviceable to you than any wonderful overnight growth of knowledge.

Furthermore, no man can learn anything without a motive or incentive, a good, strong, sensible motive. Whatever you study must be studied with the view of making use, in some way, of the knowledge gained or the ability acquired. And not only use, but some benevolent, philanthropic use. Horace Mann did not think that any self-improvement could be vital, or worthy, that did not ally itself with the improvement of others. When you study, think of what good you can do with your knowledge, as well as of how much fame you can win, or of how much money you can make. I do not say you should not think of the latter; you should; for I believe with Horace Greeley that every healthy young man, in this country, ought to be ashamed of being poor. But I also believe that a man who, with all the knowledge in the world, thinks of nothing but his own success, and never dreams of helping mankind in any way, of ameliorating the evils of society, is a poor, pitiful creature; sure to be miserable in the end, and to find all his honors and gains turn to ashes in his grasp. That is what the Apostle Paul means, when he says that all the gifts under heaven avail nothing without charity.

> **Let all the ends thou aimst at be thy country's,**
> **Thy God's and truth's; then, if thou fall'st,**
> **Thou fall'st a blessed martyr!**

Never study on speculation; all such study is vain. Form a plan; have an object; then work for it; learn all you can about it, and you will be sure to succeed. What I mean by studying on speculation is that aimless learning of things because they *may* be useful

some day; which is like the conduct of the woman who bought at auction a brass door-plate with the name of *Thompson* on it, thinking it might come in useful some day! You should study things that you know cannot fail, under ordinary circumstances, to be useful. "It is not the quantity of study that one gets through," says Mr. Smiles, "nor the amount of reading done, that makes one a wise man; but the suitableness of the study to the purpose for which it is pursued; the concentration of the mind, for the time being, on the subject under consideration, and the habitual discipline by which the mental powers are thus regulated." Do not neglect, however, to devote some time to any subject which you like, whether there be a direct promise of usefulness in it or not, for this is what you are apt to do best, and is therefore in the direct line of success. You may pursue this as a recreative hobby, which often leads one to the profession for which he is best fitted.

Application, regular, constant, steady application, in furnishing and equipping the mind with all that it is capable of, is the great thing. Not even a genius can produce anything valuable without exertion of some kind. As every soil must be fed with proper ingredients before it will produce anything of value, so must the mind of man be fed with the thoughts and experiences, the discoveries and inventions, of other men before it will produce anything wholesome or nutritious. The uncultivated mind will, like the rank soil, produce nothing but weeds. A man can no more produce a work of art without study than a farmer can produce crops without sowing. "Genius," says Macaulay, "is subject to the same laws as those which

regulate the production of cotton and molasses." "To ascribe to genius," says Professor Tyler, "strictly creative power, which can work without instruments or materials, is to ascribe to it prerogatives which belong to nothing earthly. God alone can create out of nothing. Man can produce only by time and toil, reflection and study, proportioned to the value of the production."

"The masterpieces of antiquity, as well in literature as in art," says Henry Ward Beecher, "are known to have received their extreme finish from an almost incredible continuance of labor upon them. I do not remember a book in all the departments of learning, nor a scrap in literature, nor a work in all the schools of art, from which its author has derived a permanent renown, that is not known to have been long and patiently elaborated. Genius needs industry as much as industry needs genius. If only Milton's imagination could have conceived his visions, his consummate industry alone could have carved the immortal lines which enshrine them. If only Newton's mind could reach out to the secrets of nature, even *his* genius could do it only by the homeliest toil. The works of Bacon are not midsummer-night dreams, but, like coral islands, they have risen from the depths of truth, and formed their broad surfaces above the ocean by the minutest accretions of persevering labor. The conceptions of Michael Angelo would have perished like a night's phantasy, had not his industry given them permanence."

Daniel Webster never spoke in public without careful preparation. He despised the affectation of those who trusted to the spur of the moment, and

he thought it a duty he owed to those before whom he was to speak to consider carefully beforehand what he intended to say. He never appeared before the court, the bar, the Senate or the people without making out a well-considered plan of his speech and weighing every point to be made. The result is that all his speeches are as worthy of being read to-day as they were of being listened to when spoken, for they contain sentiments that are always fresh and new, always applicable, and probably no speeches in our language are more largely read at the present day than those of this master of eloquence.

Few persons ever suspect, while reading the works of the most brilliant essayist and historian of modern times, the extreme care and pains he took in preparing his matter and polishing his sentences. Mr. Trevelyan, in his "Life of Macaulay," makes the following remarkable statement:

"The main secret of Macaulay's success lay in this, that to extraordinary fluency and facility he united patient, minute and persistent diligence. He well knew, as Chaucer knew before:

**There is no workeman**
**That can both worken well and hastilie:**
**This must be done at leisure parfaitlie.**

As soon as he had got into his head all the information relating to any particular episode in his 'History,' he would sit down and write off the whole story at a headlong pace, sketching in the outlines under the genial and audacious impulse of a first conception, and securing in black and white each idea and epithet and turn of phrase, as it flowed

straight from his busy brain to his rapid fingers. His manuscript appeared, at this stage, to the eyes of anyone but himself, to consist of column after column of dashes and flourishes, in which a straight line, with a half-formed letter at each end and another in the middle, did duty for a word. As soon as he had finished his rough draft he began to fill it in at the rate of six sides of foolscap every morning, written in so large a hand and with such a multitude of erasures that the whole six pages were, on an average, compressed into two pages of print. This portion he called his daily 'task,' and he was never quite easy unless he completed it daily. . . . He never allowed a sentence to pass muster until it was as good as he could make it. He thought little of recasting a chapter in order to obtain a more lucid arrangement, and nothing whatever of reconstructing a paragraph for the sake of one happy stroke or apt illustration.

**Antonio Stradivari has an eye**
**That winces at false work and loves the true.**

Leonardo da Vinci would walk the whole length of Milan that he might alter a single tint in his picture of the 'Last Supper.' Napoleon kept the returns of his army under his pillow at night, to refer to in case he was sleepless, and would set himself problems at the opera while the overture was playing: 'I have ten thousand men at Strasbourg; fifteen thousand at Magdeburg; twenty thousand at Wurzburg. By what stages must they march so as to arrive at Ratisbon on three successive days?' What his violins were to Stradivarius, and his fresco to Leonardo, and his campaigns to Napoleon, that was his 'History' to Macaulay."

Even Sheridan, who is commonly regarded as one of those marvellous geniuses who never open their mouths without dropping pearls of wit and wisdom, took good care to make a careful preparation, a close study of his subject, whenever any great effort was to be made. Tom Moore thinks that one reason for the success of his famous Begum speech was that he had come fresh from an exhaustive study of the whole subject of Indian affairs, and therefore poured out his arguments and descriptions with a vividness and freshness that a life-long student could hardly command. When the world gave Sheridan credit for being asleep, he was sitting up in his bed, early in the morning, preparing his witty sayings for the evening. It is known that he wrote and re-wrote over and over again several if not all of his brilliant comedies; hence their rare polish and abundance of sparkling wit. "Easy writing," he says himself, "is commonly damned hard reading." The same was the practice of many other writers, notably of Bolingbroke, Pope and Gibbon. Bolingbroke, who was one of the most brilliant men of a brilliant age, was such a tireless worker that Swift, himself a hard-working student, marvelled at his power of application. "He would plod whole days and nights," he says, "like the lowest clerk in his office." Pope on one occasion brought two of his poems to Dodsley, his publisher, to be fairly copied. "Every line," said Dodsley, "was then written twice over by Pope. I gave him a clean transcript, which he sent me some time afterward for the press with every line written twice over a second time." Gibbon wrote out his Memoir nine times before he was satisfied with it; and the first chapters of his History he wrote out twice as

many times. Montesquieu, speaking of one of his works, said to a friend: "You will read it in a few hours, but I assure you it has cost me so much labor that it has whitened my hair."

If there is any man who might seem to be an exception to the rule, it is Mirabeau, who, after living forty years without making any sign, suddenly sprang into fame as an all-powerful orator and all-accomplished statesman. His whole brilliant public career is included within twenty-three months: yet in this period he did more work than many a statesman in twenty-three years. In fact he was a prodigious worker. "Had I not lived with him," says Dumont, "I should never have had any idea of what a man may do within a single day; what business may be transacted in the course of twelve hours. A day for this man was as much as a week or a month for another." Mirabeau's secretary once said to him that something was impossible. "Impossible!" said he, jumping from his chair, "never name to me again that blockhead's word!"

Perhaps the chief reason why these men excelled other men is because they took more pains than other men. They believed that what was worth doing at all was worth doing well. George Ripley said that he who does not write as well as he can on every occasion will soon form the habit of not writing well on any occasion. Even Sir Isaac Newton himself, who is set down by scientific philosophers as the greatest genius of all times and of all countries,

**So near the gods, man cannot nearer go,**

declared that whatever service he had rendered to humanity was not owing to any extraordinary sagacity he possessed, but solely to industry and patient thought.

How different this is from the popular conception of genius! In fact, most people seem to imagine that genius has nothing to do with industry and patient thought; that these qualities belong to plodders, and that genius works its marvels by taking advantage of certain floods of inspiration, that rise suddenly and carry one along swiftly to fame and fortune!

I once heard a very skilful and successful sea-captain exclaim, after listening with rapt attention to the holiday oration of a professional orator, "Nay, that is something beyond my capacity; something I could never do!" and he consequently looked upon the orator as a sort of superior being. But this feeling is about as reasonable as that of the boy who looks upon the feats of the professional prestidigitateur with feelings of awe, as the work of a real magician, a man endowed with supernatural power; and just as the boy's feelings become greatly modified when he is shown how the magician accomplishes his feats, so would those of the admirer of the orator be modified if he were shown all the work that precedes his performances. The orator had devoted years to the study of history, literature, science, art, elocution; he had practiced for years in debating societies and clubs; he had devoted his whole mind to public speaking as his business, the means by which he was to earn his bread; he had made it his study by day and his dream by night, the alpha and omega of his aims and objects. Had the captain served such an apprenticeship to oratory; had he even devoted as much time and pains to the study of public speaking as he had to the study of navigation and commercial enterprise, he would probably have become as skilful and accomplished in oratory as he was in navi-

gation; for the basis of success in this art, as in every other, is constant application, steady devotion to all the means leading to the end desired. "Never depend upon your genius," says John Ruskin, quoting the words of Sir Joshua Reynolds, in one of his lectures to art students: "never depend upon your genius: if you have talent, industry will improve it; if you have none, industry will supply the deficiency." If this be true in the domain of art, how much more so, or how unquestionably so, in other domains!

There is one instance in which Sir Joshua's words may be looked upon as having proved literally true. Industry certainly supplied the place of genius in the case of Anthony Trollope, who never worked for anything but money, and who never himself nor anybody else claimed that he possessed genius; and yet he was a successful novelist! This indomitable worker made it a strict duty to write his fifteen hundred words a day, rain or shine, in the vein or not in the vein; and he produced a series of novels for which he found many readers and very handsome remuneration. He followed the advice which another literary man gave him, and which he gave to Robert Buchanan: "When you sit down to write, put a piece of cobbler's wax on the bottom of your chair! That's the only way to get work done!" And I believe he got much more from the cobbler's wax than he ever got from inspiration!

## CHAPTER X.

### A WORD TO BEGINNERS IN LITERARY WORK.

"WRITING books does not pay; there is no money in it," said an able lawyer to me one day. He was himself the author of several books, and a man of fine culture and large experience. "I could earn more money," he continued, "by copying law papers at five cents a folio than by writing books."

This is doubtless correct; but the main object of a good writer is not money-making. He has something to say, and wishes to say it; that is all. One whose main object is making money should never turn author; for this is not even a bread-winning, let alone a money-making business. If the hours devoted to a piece of literary work be counted, and the amount paid for it compared with the time devoted to it, it will generally be found that the author is more poorly paid than the commonest street-sweeper.

One thing is certain, no young man, if he be at all properly informed, will dare to count upon literary work as a means of earning his daily bread—never, at least, until he has gained a name, a very considerable name, in literature. All first efforts of this kind should be made in hours of leisure, in those hours secured after

bread work. The chances of pecuniary reward for first efforts in literature are so slim that none but a novice would rely upon them for support. Every young man who takes to writing may safely count upon writing hundreds of pages before he produces anything worth reading, and then when he does produce something worth reading, he may safely count upon having hundreds of pages printed, if he get them printed at all, without pecuniary compensation. After that he may count upon receiving for his best efforts, if he persist in the work, some four or five hundred dollars a year; not more. If he keep on after that, he may count upon anything.

The reason why the literary man is so poorly paid, as compared with men of other professions, is because he is the only man whose greatest competitors are the dead. No lawyer or physician, teacher or preacher, need fear dead men; they can't plead or bleed, teach or preach any more; but the literary man works for readers only, and most readers value the work of the dead more than that of the living. Death sanctifies the author, puts a halo around his name, and immediately increases the market value of his work. His publisher has, after his death, a "corner" in his writings; he has all there is of them, and no more can be got.

**The man who makes what cannot die**
**Is seldom truly prized**
**Or rightly patronized**
**Till death his work does sanctify.**

"An author has from the start," says Mr. Wm. S. Walsh, "to compete not only with all the professionals of his own country and of other countries who speak the same language, or who are susceptible of transla-

tion, but with the amateurs who occasionally dabble in literature; and not only with the men of the present, but in a measure with those of the past. He is judged by the standards applied to the great masters of all times and countries; and if he fail in the test, the critics and more thoughtful readers speak contemptuously of his work as trash. Yet even the man who fails in literature may be cleverer than his readers or his critics, and the same amount of ability put into some calling with a more restricted field of action might win him a distinguished position in his own locality. The successful author is as one picked out of many thousands."

Good literature cannot, like boots and shoes, be produced at will. In fact, such literature is generally the outcome of flashes of inspiration. Now a man may not have more than half a dozen such flashes in his lifetime; and how can one who needs as much bread and butter, meat and potatoes, as another, expect to live on such flashes? Look into the history of literary men. You will find most of them living from hand to mouth, begging and borrowing from every acquaintance, enduring all the humiliations of poverty for half a lifetime, and receiving at last a big funeral and many eulogies. Wordsworth never received more than five hundred dollars for all the poems he ever wrote. Longfellow was obliged to print his first works at his own expense. Balzac wrote two score of novels ("had forty books killed under him") before he wrote one that paid. And so on. Very rarely is a hit made at once; and sometimes what seems a hit is only an apparent one; much talk, but few dollars. None but exceptionally bright geniuses make a hit at once, and such geniuses are rare. Byrons and Scotts are not born every year.

This is precisely where all the trouble comes in. Every young writer thinks himself an exceptionally bright genius, and is confident that his work needs only to be published to be appreciated. Nothing but dire experience will rid him of this error. To a young man who contemplated embracing literature as a profession, Carlyle said he "never heard of a madder proposal in his life; he might as well throw himself from the top of the monument with the hope of flying!"

As I write, the following newspaper paragraph, which throws a somewhat lurid light on the subject, is pointed out to me:

"Hans Jaeger, one of the cleverest authors of Norway, has accepted the place of a common sailor on one of the Scandinavian ships. Although his books are popular and read by all classes, he has not been successful financially. Long residence in the Norwegian capital and close study of the lower classes of society, which he loves to write of in his books, have undermined his health and forced him to adopt another profession. Although his hands were soft and his head was covered by a worn-out silk hat when asking for a place before the mast, his powerful frame gave the captain confidence in him, and secured him the place."

And as a correlative to this story, the following, by Julian Hawthorne, who knows whereof he speaks, will serve well:

"Five hundred dollars a year for a successful novel! How many of our authors make twice that? How many ten times as much? How many twenty times as much? I will engage to entertain at dinner, at a round table five feet in diameter, all the American novelists who make more than a thousand dollars a year out of

the royalty on any one of their novels, and to give them all they want to eat and drink, and three of the best cigars apiece afterward, and a hack to take them home in; and I will agree to forfeit a thousand dollars to the Home for Imbeciles if twenty-five dollars does not liquidate the bill, and leave enough over to buy a cloth copy of each of the works in question, with the author's autograph on the fly-leaf. One hack would be sufficient, and would allow of their putting up their feet on the seat in front of them."

Nothing less than regular employment as reporter or editorial writer can be counted on to make a living. No young man, let him be ever so gifted, should for a moment expect to support himself as a writer of books, or as a contributor to magazines. That is where poor Chatterton, and others like him, made their grand mistake. It takes at least six months to write a good novel or a good biography, and, supposing its author succeeds in getting a publisher, he may consider himself lucky if he get four or five hundred dollars for it. Of five thousand articles sent every year to Lippincott's Magazine, only two hundred were accepted, or could be accepted. Consider the amount of disappointment and suffering this fact alone reveals. And what is the reward of the successful contributor? Five to ten dollars for a thousand words—that is the usual fee. Even if he get two or three articles in every month, what a shabby compensation this affords!

There has lately been a new departure in this magazine business. The editor of a first-class magazine does not now depend upon unsolicited contributions to fill his pages; in fact he does not care for them at all. Knowing what he wants, and having the means

to pay for it, he can get it without wading through oceans of manuscript. He makes a liberal offer to several well-known writers for an article from each of so many words on a living topic of the day, and he gets them. Thus he makes up his magazine without much trouble. Do we not see that most of our leading periodicals are now stocked with articles from well-known or famous pens? That is what pays; for not only does the name of the writer attract, but the subject he writes on, which is sure to be one that is uppermost in the minds of men. The reader may ask, Pray, how came these writers to be famous? By writing for years without any pay at all; by writing hundreds of pages as mere practice-work; by working like galley-slaves at literature for half a lifetime with no other compensation than—fame.

To be sure, when a young man happens to have some new ideas on a burning topic, or a good conception of a capital story, he should by all means write it down; but he should never do this for the sake of pecuniary reward, nor, when he has done it, count upon receiving much for his work.

If he get his first efforts published at all, he may be well content. A gentleman, now well known as a writer, once said to a young lady who had some little success in magazine work, and whom he tried in vain to dissuade from continuing in it, "Well, as I see you are in for it, and are determined to live by suffering, let me give you this bit of advice: Get your name made familiar to the public as soon as you can. Every time your name is mentioned in a leading journal it is worth five dollars to you." This, you see, is one of the tricks of the trade. But getting known by good

work is far better. Work on, young writer, in leisure hours, when you are in the vein, until you have gained the ear of the public; and then you may command your price.

Now, when a young writer does begin to work, what is the best course he should take? When he has finished a piece of work, what shall he do with it? Shall he offer it immediately to a publisher, or shall he show it to some friend, and seek his judgment upon it? The latter is rather a ticklish business. We all know that friends have pronounced unfavorably upon many works which the public unhesitatingly approved. John Bunyan, for instance, submitted the manuscript of the "Pilgrim's Progress" to some of his friends; whereupon, he tells us himself,

> **Some said, 'John, print it;'**
> **Others said, 'Not so.'**
> **Some said, 'It might do good,'**
> **Others said, 'No.'**

And Burke, when he had completed his "Reflections on the French Revolution," showed it to his friend, Sir Philip Francis, who did his utmost to dissuade him from publishing it. The judgment of friends is generally either partial or over severe; and indeed it is hard to ask a friend to pronounce judgment on a new piece of literary work, for he may feel embarrassed at telling the truth about it. And if he be severe, what pain he may give the author! nay, what injury he may inflict upon him! The most lamentable case of this kind is that of poor Torquato Tasso, who, when his great poem, "Jerusalem Delivered," was completed, sent a copy of it to a sort of inquisitorial tribunal of critics at Rome, who made a great number of carping and pe-

dantic criticisms of it, to which the poor distressed author endeavored to conform. It was the revising and changing his poem to suit these critics that drove him into insanity and rendered his whole subsequent life unhappy. There is no foundation whatever for the story on which Goethe founded his drama, "Torquato Tasso," that his insanity grew out of love for the Princess Leonora of Ferrara.

The best way, I think, for the young author is this: he should lay aside his work, when completed, for about six months or a year, and then look over it and pronounce judgment on it himself. He is then himself a different person, and will look at his work with new eyes. If his work now please him, and he think it worthy of publication, he should offer it immediately to a publisher, and leave it to his judgment and that of the public. If Tasso had done this, his self-constituted critics would have joined in the general chorus of praise that followed its publication. The reader may remember that it was after a judgment of this kind that Scott concluded to finish and publish his first novel.



## CHAPTER XI.

### HOW GREAT THINGS ARE DONE.

I READ the other day of a French preacher who, whenever he appears in the pulpit of Notre Dame, draws all the élite of Paris to hear him; so fascinating, eloquent, and polished are his discourses. How comes he to acquire this power? He delivers but five or six sermons in the year, generally in the season of Lent, and then retires to his convent, to spend the rest of the year in reading and study, and in preparing his half-dozen sermons for the next season.

A preacher may compose fifty sermons in the year; but then there will not be a masterpiece among them. Dr. Wayland took two years to compose his famous sermon on foreign missions; but then it is a masterpiece, worth a ton of ordinary sermons. I have heard of an eminent lawyer who, without any uncommon oratorical gifts, won nearly every case in which he was engaged; and on being asked how he did it, he replied, "I learn all that can be learned of each case before it comes into court."

After dictating an argument to Boswell, who was preparing to speak before a Committee of the House

of Commons, Dr. Johnson said very wisely to him: "This you must enlarge on, when speaking to the Committee. You must not argue there as if you were arguing in the schools; close reasoning will not fix their attention; you must say the same thing over and over again in different words. If you say it but once, they miss it, in a moment of inattention. It is unjust, sir, to censure lawyers for multiplying words when they argue; it is often necessary for them to multiply words."

Perhaps the success of the great lawyers is largely owing to the same practice as that of the great preachers. The great aim of the latter is to make their point clear, and impress it on the minds of their hearers by every means in their power. "All great preachers," says Professor Tucker, "succeed by ceaseless reiteration, under constantly varying forms, of a few conceptions that have become supreme in their experience." The present chapter of this work, compared with that on Literary Success, presents (let me whisper it to the reader) merely an example of this practice.

If I should be asked to give an example of a man of genius who, from want of steady application to work, failed to produce what might reasonably be expected of him, I should be at a loss, for a moment, which among many examples to choose. The name of Coleridge would probably come first to my mind; but disease and opium had much to do with his sad inactivity. He was a man of uncommon genius; everything he has written bears the stamp of genius; but his will—aye, that had nothing of the character of genius in it; his will was wretchedly weak, and this was the cause of all his trouble. He planned many

things, but accomplished few. He would seldom even attempt to perform what he planned; yet in planning he was inexhaustible; boundless projects with very little performance. He was not, however, lacking in the will to talk, and his famous talks at Highgate had their effect on the crowds of young men who flocked to hear him, many of whom subsequently attained distinction. How often it thus happens that a man of the finest intellectual qualities has some fatal defect in his character which ruins him!

Perhaps no better example can be cited than that of a contemporary of his, Sir James Mackintosh, a man of brilliant talents, famous for one or two splendid speeches, one or two finished essays, and one or two masterly philosophic dissertations. How came this man to produce so little? I shall give the answer in his own words, merely premising that in his youth he had been allowed to do as he pleased, and had acquired an indolent habit of straying aimlessly from one subject to another. "No subsequent circumstance," he says, "could make up for that invaluable habit of vigorous and methodical industry which the indulgence and irregularity of my school-life prevented me from acquiring, and of which I have painfully felt the want in every part of my life." Sir James lived till near three score and ten; and yet, though a man of rare gifts, with a profound knowledge of art and literature, philosophy and politics, he left little more than a few "precious fragments," which simply prove what he might have done, had he possessed that "invaluable habit," the want of which he so touchingly deplores.

I might give you a dozen such examples; but it is

not necessary. I have already shown that the finest genius in the world has done what it has done mainly by industry and patient thought: and I wish now to emphasize the fact that no habit is so valuable, no love of anything in the world so precious, as the love of labor, of constantly and regularly producing something useful. Not only does it conduce to success in life, but it is the purifier of character, the producer of sane thoughts and of a sweet, wholesome, contented life. For "success is no success at all if it makes not a happy mind." A diligent workman, let him be ever so ignorant, is a far better man than the most cultivated idler. This is something that is never considered by those fathers and mothers who want their sons to be bank-clerks and Wall-street merchants. Such positions, with little to do and much to get, are the very express-roads to perdition. The one great mistake that General Grant made was getting in among the Wall-street sharks.

No man who values his character, no man who values the true welfare of his children, should engage or cause his children to engage in a business whose main object is to MAKE money, not to EARN it; to grow rich without labor; to rise on the ruin of others, and to steep the senses in the enjoyment of material wealth. "Wealth," says some one, "can never be conjured out of the crucible of political or commercial gambling. It must be hewed out of the forest, dug out of the earth, blasted out of the mine, pounded out on the anvil, wrought out of the machine-shop, or worked out of the loom." That is why Austria is such a wretchedly poor, bankrupt country; one of its chief sources of revenue (and chief corruptions

of the people) is its State lotteries, by which, though nothing is produced, everybody expects to get rich.

"Of all the work that produces results," says the Bishop of Exeter, "*nine-tenths must be drudgery.* There is no work, from the highest to the lowest, that can be done by any man who is unwilling to make that sacrifice. Part of the very nobility of the devotion of the true workman to his work consists in the fact that he is not daunted by finding that drudgery must be done; and no man can really succeed in any walk of life without a good deal of what in ordinary English is called pluck."

"Ah!" said a brave painter to Mr. Emerson, "if a man has failed, you will find he has dreamed instead of working. There is no way to success in our art but to take off your coat, grind paint, and work like a digger on the railroad, all day and every day."

This is the secret of the success of the Germans in this country; they are never afraid of drudgery; they will study and learn anything to succeed. While French merchants, for instance, never think of learning any language but their own, the Germans learn, when required, nearly every language of Europe. When the French do business with any foreign country, they write to that country in the language of France; but the Germans write in the language of the country with which they trade. The young merchants of Germany learn their business so thoroughly well that they get into superior positions wherever they go. After a four years' course in a commercial school, they serve three years longer in business houses without pay. The Germans strive, in fact, after thorough equipment in all the professions. There are no quacks or halflings in Ger-

many. Such people are not tolerated. The leading merchants of France have found this out by experience. When the writer was in Paris, in 1862, he found that most of the responsible positions in mercantile houses were filled by young Germans. For a young Frenchman has five hundred thoughts on amour for one on any other subject. When the Parisians, at the outbreak of the late Franco-Prussian war, lost their heads and banished the Germans from their city, they sent away their most skilful workmen in all those fine and fancy articles for which they had become famous; and, after the war, the Parisians found that most of their trade had gone with the workmen to Vienna. They had killed the goose that laid the golden eggs.

The law of progress is by gradual steps. A great invention is usually the result of the labors of three or four men living at different periods; and had not the first done his part, the second would not have done his, nor the third completed it. Galvani gave the first intimation of the science which bears his name, galvanism; Volta showed that it was a source of power of incalculable importance; and Humphrey Davy, from the application of the galvanic energy to the composition and decomposition of various chemical substances, showed that the power called chemical affinity is identical with that called electricity, thus creating a new science called electro-chemistry; and thence he proceeded, in the same line of experiments, until he made his grand invention, the Safety Lamp. Torricelli invented the barometer; but he had no idea of the various uses to which it was to be applied. It was Pascal who showed that it might be used for measuring the height of any place to which it could be carried;

and it was, I think, Priestley who showed its various uses in physical and mechanical researches. Napoleon sent Jacquard to study the models of machines in the Paris Museum of Inventions, and Jacquard found there the model of a machine which gave him the idea for constructing his wonderful carpet pattern-weaving loom. The Marquis of Worcester made, in 1655, a machine which, by the expansive power of steam, raised water to the height of forty feet; then Thomas Newcomen, an ingenious mechanic, constructed, about half a century later, a kind of steam and atmospheric engine, which was used for working pumps; and half a century after this, James Watt, while still working as a mathematical instrument maker, hit upon the ingenious expedient, the missing link, which practically made the steam engine what it is, the greatest invention ever made. Thus the great inventors and discoverers had predecessors who indicated or attempted something such as they achieved; thus were they, as Dr. Hedge calls them, a succession of great bridge builders—men who spanned the chasm between the beginning and the ending of great inventions and discoveries.

The same is doubtless true of the great creators in literature and art. There were epic poets, no doubt, before Homer, just as there were dramatists before Shakespeare; and certainly neither Homer nor Shakespeare could have achieved anything such as they did achieve, had they had no predecessors. We know, in fact, that Shakespeare first essayed his marvellous power of dramatic composition by retouching and reviving old plays —literary corpses into which he breathed the breath of life—and I have no doubt that Homer did some inferior work before he rose to the Iliad. We do not know that

the Iliad and the Odyssey *are* the greatest epics of antiquity; we know only that they are the greatest that have come down to us.

Thus it is that the studies and labors of one man help on the studies and labors of another; thus it is that thoughts produce thoughts; inventions produce inventions; poems produce poems; pictures produce pictures; laws produce laws; and thus the arts and sciences are carried forward, link after link, by one mind after another, till the chain be complete. "No man," says Garfield, "can make a speech alone. It is the great human power that strikes from a thousand minds; this acts upon him and makes the speech." Think of that, young man, when you are reading Burke's or Webster's masterpieces of oratory; think of that, young woman, when you are reading Walter Scott's or George Eliot's masterpieces of fiction. You may not make such speeches or write such stories; but they have their influence upon you; you carry away something from them; and they will help you to make good speeches or to write good stories of your own. Any other kind you should never attempt to make or to write. "A man who writes well," says Montesquieu, "writes not as others write, but as he himself writes; it is often in speaking badly that he speaks well." Chatham's speeches, for instance, consisted of a series of rugged, broken sentences; but they were his own, full of significance, characteristic, and true, and they carried ten times as much weight as the smooth, fluent, well-worded speeches of his opponents.

I remember seeing a brawny-armed quarryman strike forty blows with a big hammer on a huge block of granite, all apparently in vain. I said to him, "I should

think, if you can't break that block in ten blows, you can't do it in a hundred." "Oh yes," said he, "every blow tells." I was struck with the remark; and I never forgot it. It is a good illustration of all successful work. It may not be apparent, but every conversation, every speech, every sermon, every story, every experience in life *tells* in making up the man. And when a man, in some supreme moment, produces, without any apparent effort, and without any previous preparation, a masterpiece of oratory, a grand blaze of eloquence like Chatham's answer to Lord Suffolk, or Webster's reply to Hayne, it is simply the outcome of years of study and reflection, the product of a mind stored with the wit and wisdom of past ages, and trained to successful effort in the moment of necessity. "What though the fire bursts forth at length," says Dr. Dewey, "'like volcanic fires, with spontaneous, original, native force?' It only shows the intenser action of the elements beneath. What though it breaks like lightning from the cloud? The electric fire had been collecting in the firmament through many a silent, calm and clear day."

## CHAPTER XII.

GENIUS IN DEBATE—CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GREAT ORATORS.

THE arena of debate, which has always been magically attractive to youthful minds, is that in which most of our eminent public men, past and present, have won their title to fame. It is perhaps the most favorable of all arenas for receiving public recognition of talent and those large honors and emoluments that flow from public employment. There are probably no names that occupy a more enviable place in modern history, or that are dearer to the hearts of their countrymen, than those of Chatham and Burke, Grattan and O'Connell, Mirabeau and Gambetta, Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams, Clay and Webster, Lincoln and Garfield. The noble sentiments they expressed and the heroic stand they took on momentous occasions have won for them imperishable renown; and the record of the words they spoke on these occasions has fascinated, and will continue to fascinate, all noble minds for ages to come.

No wonder, therefore, that the aspiring youth is captivated by the career of a successful orator; no wonder that he looks upon such a career as peerless in its opportunities for fame. What ideal can be more fascinating to a young man than that of commanding the attention of the listening Senate in the

evening, and having his words flashed over the country and eagerly read by the whole nation on the following morning? What position can be more captivating to such a youth than that of representing his native State in the great Council of the nation—of speaking and acting in the name and for the interest of millions of his countrymen? There is in fact no grander career than this; for he who speaks effectively in the Senate chamber commands perhaps the most far-reaching influence of any man on this earth: he not only helps to make laws which influence for good or ill millions of his countrymen of his own generation, but of the generations to come; he stamps the impress of his mind on the masses of his own day and on all those who come after him. Neither the lawyer nor the clergyman, neither the physician nor the professor, has any influence at all comparable to that of the statesman. Of the orator, more emphatically than of any other, may it truly be said, "though dead, he yet speaketh." Who has not been influenced by some of Chatham's, or Burke's, or Webster's speeches? Who that has any taste for literature has not stored up in his memory or engraved on his heart some of the nobler passages in the speeches of the great orators of antiquity?

There are some episodes in the lives of great orators that are particularly striking. One of Sheridan's famous triumphs was of a triple nature. On the same evening that he held Parliament spell-bound by his eloquence, two other audiences were listening with rapt attention to his superb comedies, the "Rivals" and the "School for Scandal." This was brilliant; but there is something of Sheridonian art about it.

Edmund Burke, pronouncing his famous speech against Warren Hastings before that noble and brilliant assembly in the great hall of William Rufus, so fascinatingly described by Macaulay, presents one of the grandest figures in history. Daniel Webster, standing before the Senate of the United States, the central figure in an assembly composed of the combined representatives of the nation, and surrounded by persons of distinction from foreign countries and from all parts of the Union, pronouncing his magnificent reply to Hayne, the matchless answer of the great North to the subtle, dangerous South, is an equally grand figure. But, to my mind, the grandest figure in history, the most sublime in literature, is that presented by Lord Chatham, as the leader of his country's policy in her palmiest days, as described by Grattan:

"The secretary stood alone. Modern degeneracy had not reached him. Original and unaccommodating, the features of his character had the hardihood of antiquity. His august mind overawed majesty; and one of his sovereigns thought royalty so impaired in his presence, that he conspired to remove him, in order to be relieved from his superiority. No state chicanery, no narrow system of vicious politics, sunk him to the level of the vulgar great; but, overbearing, persuasive, and impracticable, his object was England; his ambition, fame. Without dividing, he destroyed party; without corrupting, he made a venal age unanimous. France sank beneath him. With one hand he smote the house of Bourbon, and with the other he wielded the democracy of England. The scope of his mind was infinite; and his schemes were to affect, not England alone, not the present age only, but Europe and posterity. Wonderful were the means by which these schemes were accomplished; always seasonable, always adequate, the suggestions of an understanding animated by ardor and enlightened by prophecy.

"A character so exalted, so unsullied, so various, so authoritative, astonished a corrupt age, and the Treasury trembled at the name of PITT through all the classes of venality. Corruption imagined, indeed, that she had found defects in this statesman, and talked much of the inconsistency of his policy, and much of the ruin of his victories; but the history of his country and the calamities of the enemy answered and refuted her. Nor were his political abilities his only talents; his eloquence was an era in the Senate, peculiar and spontaneous, familiarly expressing gigantic sentiments and instinctive wisdom; not like the torrent of Demosthenes, or the splendid conflagration of Tully; it resembled sometimes the thunder, sometimes the music of the spheres. He did not, like Mansfield, conduct the understanding through the painful subtlety of argumentation; nor was he, like Townsend, forever on the rack of exertion; but rather lightened upon the subject, and reached the point by the flashings of his mind, which, like those of his eye, were felt, but could not be followed. Upon the whole, there was in this man something that could create, subvert, or reform; an understanding, a spirit, and an eloquence to summon mankind to united exertion, or to break the bonds of slavery asunder, and to rule the wilderness of free minds with unbounded authority; something that could establish or overwhelm an empire, and strike a blow in the world that would resound through the universe."

How contemptible, how utterly despicable the perfidious, plotting assassins, the cut-throat Napoleons look beside such a man! And how ineffably despicable the reverend slave, their American historian, Abbott, who could deify and worship such scoundrels! The life of such a man as Chatham, like that of Washington, confers a precious boon, not only on his countrymen, but on mankind. For the lives of the truly great are the quickeners of virtue and patriotism. "No man," said a soldier of his time, "ever entered Mr. Pitt's closet who did not feel himself a braver man when he came out." And no man who reads Mr. Pitt's life (and I beg

the reader not to confound him with Pitt the younger) can fail to become a better man than he was before. Can any one affirm this of the Napoleons? Are not both of them steeped in blood, cruelty, and treachery? Had Chatham been prime minister of England at the time of our American Revolution, there would have been no "Stamp Act," no "Duty on tea, painters' colors, and glass;" none of the stupid blunders committed by Lord North. It was Chatham who declared to Parliament that the colonists were, like themselves, the heirs of British liberty, cradled and trained in freedom, and absolutely unconquerable; that were he an American, as he was an Englishman, he would "never lay down his arms while a foreign troop was quartered on his native soil; never, never, never!"

We have a score of Americans, now among the immortals, who may be worthily compared to Chatham. Notably among these are Washington and Hamilton, Lincoln and Stanton; but whom have we *to-day* to compare with such a man? *We* have fallen upon the venal age of the great orator, without one single, steadfast luminary to relieve the deadly darkness of corruption; an age when Wealth has grasped everything in her hands, and the high places of the nation, the seats of Webster, Clay, and Sumner, once consecrated to genius, virtue, and patriotism, are bargained for and sold to the highest bidder. It has been well observed that when Carl Schurz represented his State in the Senate, we knew what Missouri had to say on every important question; but who knows even the name of the man who represents her to-day?

I have placed the name of Lincoln among those of the great orators. Most men think of Lincoln, not as

an orator, but as a wise ruler, a large-hearted statesman, a great chief magistrate, whose name finds fit association with that of Washington; but he was one of the greatest orators this country ever produced; and if you want a proof of this, you will find it in the debate between Lincoln and Douglas in the Illinois contest for the United States Senatorship in 1858; a debate in which you will see, not one, but two intellectual giants struggling for the mastery.

For free, natural, spontaneous eloquence; for strong argument and matchless fascination of manner, commend me to Robert G. Ingersoll—I do not know any living orator to equal him. Such a continuous stream of free-flowing, living thought, of bold, noble sentiments, expressed in strong, every-day English, is not found in any other speaker of our day. O, that the sons of Toil could capture him, convert him to their faith, and make him the expounder and defender of their cause! They would then have an orator who would make their cause as popular, as interesting, as surely victorious as Wendell Phillips made the anti-slavery cause. Ingersoll's Cooper Institute speech in favor of Garfield, in the Garfield-Hancock campaign, is the finest political oration I ever heard or read in my life. What forcible, convincing, consummate arguments! What marvellously rich illustrations! and what an accumulation of proofs in support of his argument! What enthusiastic good feeling he aroused, and how completely and easily he carried his audience along with him! What a crowning triumph to pronounce a speech that is accompanied by one round of enthusiastic and re-echoing applause from beginning to end!

Webster's power as an orator was founded on great natural ability, developed by a liberal education, and strengthened and ennobled by constant and varied study. Nothing came amiss to him; like all great men, he drew upon all sources to improve and enlarge the powers of his mind. His language, his images, his whole style has something of classic purity about it; his figures and illustrations are drawn from the noblest sources; his sentences are strong, forcible, polished; his manner is highly dignified and impressive; and his power of seizing and disposing of the salient points in an argument unequalled. For great mental power, sound logical reasoning, and classic purity of style, Webster stands unrivalled. It was his large literary culture that enabled him to give such noble expression to those patriotic sentiments which have rendered his speeches the admiration of every citizen and the favorite declamation of every student of oratory. While Calhoun dealt in cool logical syllogisms, which none but lawyers could fully appreciate, Webster appealed to those warm and generous sentiments which all can appreciate—love of country, pride in its honor and prosperity, and anxiety for its preservation—sentiments which find an echo in every true American heart.

The only orator of modern times who can at all be compared to him is Edmund Burke; yet Burke's scholarly, richly suggestive and philosophic speeches had often the effect, unlike Webster's, of emptying the halls of legislation in which they were delivered. Burke seems to have soared above the heads of his audience; Webster attracted his hearers, lifted them up to his region of thought, and carried them along with him.

"Does it read well? If it does, it is a bad speech!"

said Charles James Fox concerning a recently delivered speech. Measured by this standard, Webster was inferior to Clay, whose speeches do not read so well as the former's. Clay, however, had such a marvellously winning way with him, that few could withstand his appeals; and I have no doubt that his speeches were even more effective than those of the great expounder of the Constitution.

"Of narrow education," says a writer in The Voice, "bred in no very polished society, and never much given to reading, Henry Clay's culture was gathered chiefly from the society of the people with whom he came in contact, and from the enterprises in which he was engaged. We shall look in vain, in his reported speeches, for scholastic beauties or literary gems; in vain for affluent imagery or polished periods. No; his eloquence was fed from other fountains. His words were picked up from a few books and from many men; some of them good, some bad, like the variety of human nature which he had fallen in with. He shook hands with the hunters of the West and the scholars of the East; with wagon-boys from Ohio and presidents from Virginia; and from them all he had gathered and garnered up his common but copious vocabulary. He spoke as the battle of debate demanded: instant, fervid, to the very point of the moment. He had no time for preparation, for choice diction, for culled periods. His power lay hidden in his lofty and Roman-like *character,* and in his fervid *sensibility;* and his appeals were always to the nobler thoughts and the loftier passions of men."

Frenchmen and Spaniards have more of the whirlwind in their speeches than Englishmen or Americans;

consequently their orators surpass all others in rapidity, vehemence, and sublimity of utterance. Just listen to Mr. John Hay's admirable description of the eloquence of Castelar:

"Whatever may be said of his enduring influence upon legislation, there can be no difference of opinion in regard to his transcendent gifts as an orator. There is something almost superhuman in his delivery. He is the only man I have ever seen who produces, in very truth, those astounding effects which I have always thought the inventions of poets and the exaggerations of biographers. When you have heard Castelar, the 'torrent of Demosthenes' and 'the conflagration of Tully' cease to be unmeaning metaphors. His speech is like a torrent in its inconceivable fluency, like a raging fire in its brilliancy of color and terrible energy of passion. Never for an instant is the wonderful current of declamation checked by the pauses, the hesitations, the deliberations that mark all Anglo-Saxon debate. An entire oration will be delivered with precisely the fluent energy which a veteran actor exhibits in his most passionate scenes; and when you consider that this is not conned beforehand, but is struck off instantly, in the very heat and spasm of utterance, it seems little short of inspiration. And yet so perfect is his diction, that the most fastidious rhetorician could not produce periods of more exquisite harmony, antitheses more sharp and shining, metaphors more neatly fitting, all uttered with a distinct rapidity that makes the despair of stenographers. His memory, which is under perfect discipline, is prodigious, and he has the world's history at his tongue's end. No fact is too insignificant to be retained nor too stale to do service."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### DEBATE AND DEBATING SOCIETIES.

TO a young man seeking intellectual development and the power of persuasive speech, there is perhaps no more profitable exercise than that of debate, and no more excellent school than a debating society. Such a society is usually composed of young men who are desirous of cultivating and strengthening their intellectual powers by friendly contact with other minds, by the free exchange of ideas in conversation, by rational discussion and literary exercises. Now all the exercises of a debating society, the interchange of thought on the questions of the day, the exciting debate on special subjects, the quick reply and the flashing retort, the spirited declamation, the animated dialogue, and the pointed enforcement of parliamentary rules—all these have a most salutary effect on the mind, rousing ambition to excel, kindling the mind into a blaze of generous enthusiasm, and exciting a love of study, of literature and eloquence, such as no other exercises can excite. When I hear of a young man joining a debating society, I know that to him the period of mental awakening has come, and that his further intellectual development, be his opportunities what they may, is only a question of time.

Societies of this kind spring up spontaneously among the aspiring youth of our country; for the freedom of our institutions encourages the expression of thought and the cultivation of eloquence. No people has so much to do with public affairs and public speaking as ours, and everybody knows that power as a public speaker leads to positions of honor and influence. The chief reason why the profession of the law has such fascination for so many of our young men is because it brings them into the arena of debate, and thence on to the most influential positions in the nation. Probably more than half of our public men, our Congressmen and State Senators, come out of this single profession. Unlike the merchant's career, there are elements of battle in that of the lawyer; attack, defence, skirmish, stratagem, surprise, sudden onslaught, victory, or defeat; and intellectual victories are the noblest of all victories. Even our boys in school take an eager interest in debate; for it is like a game that has something of the nature of a trial of strength in it. I well remember the interesting weekly debate which was carried on by the boys of the highest class of the Hoboken Academy. I had turned one lesson into the regular exercises of a debating society, with all the formality of president, vice-president, secretary, critic, and editor, and I found this exercise one of the most interesting and profitable in the whole curriculum; one to which the boys looked forward with keen anticipations of pleasure, for which they always carefully prepared themselves, and to which they subsequently looked back, long after leaving school, with feelings of pleasure and satisfaction.

There are few good speakers who have not been ma-

terially benefited by practice of this sort. If you dip into the lives of our modern English and American political leaders, you will find that most of them enjoyed its advantages. Sir Francis Doyle says that nearly all his school-fellows, among whom were a remarkably large number of young men who attained distinction as speakers and statesmen, took a lively interest in the College Debating Society. "Had it not been for the Debating Society," he says, "where our wits were sharpened by daily collisions and where we made more way, unless I am greatly mistaken, than in school, I should have known nothing of Mr. Gladstone or of my beloved friend Arthur Hallam; nothing of Bruce, afterwards Lord Elgin; of Wentworth, who became the elder Lord Milton; of Canning, the future prime minister; of Selwin, Pickering, Sir John Hanmer, Milnes, Gaskell, and many others—all these would have been equally out of my ken." Had that master of language and style, Edward Gibbon, practiced in such a society in his youth, he would not have sat for eight years a member of the House of Commons without ever opening his mouth in debate.

To the young man ambitious of shining in public affairs, connection with a debating society is a necessity; it is to him a veritable intellectual gymnasium; a drilling-ground in which he acquires the power of marshalling his troops in regular order, of placing his forces in solid phalanx against those of the enemy. Here he will get a practical knowledge of his own powers and considerable knowledge of those of others. His timidity will be lessened; his diffidence changed into manly self-confidence. If he have anything of the fire of genius in him, here it will show itself; here it

will burst into flame; for it is in such encounters that dormant qualities are struck into life. As in the heat of battle, many a man, little suspected of heroic qualities, turns out a hero; so in the ardor of debate, many a man, little suspected of oratorical powers, turns out an orator. When the soul is once touched, or stirred into life, thoughts and feelings come rushing into the mind like a mountain torrent; utterance becomes a necessity, and speech flows as naturally as breathing; then the man speaks, not merely with his tongue, but with every fibre of his body. For the true orator, says Reeves, "is one who *feels* what he utters, and who, abandoning all art and artifice, gives *unrestrained expression* to what he feels."

Let me say a word to the young debater: Never get up to speak before you know what you are going to say. When you have nothing to say, say it. It is all moonshine to trust to the spur of the moment. The spur of the moment will probably make you say something stupid or ridiculous—something you will regret having said at all. Lord Cockburn tells of a man who, having been unexpectedly requested to give a toast at a public dinner, cast about for something fine, and then gave: "Here's to the moon, shining on the calm bosom of the lake!"

If you want to become clear and definite in your views on any subject, the best thing you can do is to *state* your views to somebody, to *talk* about them, and hear what others have to *say* about them. This is the exercise of the debating society. Discussion is a sort of ordeal in which a man's sound views are confirmed and his spurious ones destroyed. In short, the debating society is a school where young people learn

to walk, run, fly and soar in debate; where they acquire such mastery in the use of the faculties necessary for discussion, that when the time comes for serious effort, they will employ these faculties to much greater advantage than if they had never practiced at all. For every debate involves, as a necessity, a certain preparation; and every preparation involves, as a necessity, the examination of evidence, the sifting of facts, the drawing of inferences, and the forming of a judgment; and these develop the faculty of *logical thinking*, which is the *basis* of all *persuasive power* in speech.

There are some writers and speakers—the most tedious and unprofitable living—who trust to the last word of each sentence for inspiring the next. Mr. E. E. Hale tells of a Sunday school orator who used to begin a speech without the slightest idea of what he was going to say, and go on thus: "My dear young friends, I do not know that I have anything to say to you, but I am very much obliged to your teachers for asking me to address you this beautiful Sunday morning.—The *morning* is so beautiful after the refreshment of the night, that, as I walked to church, and looked around, and breathed the fresh air, I felt more than ever what a privilege it is to live in so wonderful a world. —For the *world*, dear children, has been all contrived and set in order for us by a Power so much higher than our own, that we might enjoy our own lives and live for the happiness and good of our brothers and sisters. —*Our brothers and our sisters* they are indeed, though some of them are in distant lands, and beneath other skies, and parted from us by the broad oceans.—These *oceans*, indeed," etc., etc. Now a man may speak like that for days without making anybody the wiser—he

might speak against time, and win every time. But that is all his speech would be good for. I remember having a gentleman pointed out to me—I think his name is Luke Cozzens—who, in the New York Assembly, spoke for five hours against a certain bill in order to kill it by speaking till the session was over. I can hardly imagine how he did it except by the method of the Sunday school orator.

Archbishop Whately, in the introduction to his well known work on Logic, advises the student to avoid debating societies, as places whose exercises conduce to superficiality of thought, shallow views of men and things, and flippancy in the expression of those views. I quote from memory. These are not his exact words, but this is, I think, his thought. The archbishop might as well advise the youth who wishes to learn to swim to avoid shallow places, and plunge at once into deep water. This, however, is what I take to be the surest way to get drowned, literally and figuratively; for he who expects to become, by study alone, an orator at one bound,—to be able, on his first attempt, to make a first-class speech,—will assuredly find that he has made a grand mistake, and retire in confusion from the scene of his exploit. A man may become a good *reader of essays* by study alone; but he will never make speeches or become an orator. An orator must be able—and nothing but constant practice in debate will enable him to do it—to think as freely and easily while standing before an audience as when sitting in his study; nay, the audience must give him a certain inspiration which he will seek in vain in his study, and this inspiration will enable him to carry his audience along with him to the goal he is aiming at. For when the orator

touches the hearts of his hearers, there is a sort of electric flash of sympathetic feeling that passes from them to him; and thus they give each other support and inspiration.

The archbishop makes a serious mistake. Though the talk of young people is more or less superficial, the arguments of opponents in debate are not lost on the young debater. No matter what he may *say* on the floor in opposition to sound arguments, he cannot escape *feeling* them; he cannot help *noticing* them; he cannot help being *impressed* by them; he cannot help *thinking* of them, and they will inevitably stimulate him to further thought and study. Gradually, by all this listening, thinking, reading, speaking, and reflecting, he will come to reason more cogently and accurately; to examine more sharply and thoughtfully; to look below the surface of things and grasp the salient points of an argument; he will come to consider what can be said for, as well as against a proposition, and to make up his mind on which side lie truth and justice. And the delight of independent thinking and free speaking, once tasted, will not be likely to be given up for less noble pursuits; nor will he be satisfied with anything less than real ability as a thinker and speaker.

By the practice of debate, he will learn to express his thought in plain, forcible language. He will use the words of talk, not those of elaborate literary composition, with which no man ever moved an audience. For the words of a spoken speech are as different from those of a written speech as the words of an elaborate essay are different from those of every-day talk. Compare, for instance, Dr. Johnson's talk, as reported by Boswell, with his printed works, and you will get an idea of the

difference at once. Talking one day of a certain play, Johnson said, "It has not wit enough to keep it sweet;" then, after a pause, "It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction." This last was his written style; the former, his spoken style; which is by far the better. "I am fond," says Edward Everett Hale, "of telling the story of the words which a distinguished friend of mine used in accepting a hard post of duty. He said: 'I do not think I am fit for this post. But my friends say I am, and I trust them. I shall take it; and when I am in it I shall do as well as I can.' It is a very grand speech," continues Mr. Hale. "Observe that it has not one word which is more than one syllable. As it happens, too, every word is Saxon—there is not one spurt of Latin in it. Yet this was a learned man, who, if he chose, could have said the whole in Latin. But he was an American gentleman talking to another American gentleman, and he therefore chose to use the tongue to which they both were born."

"Why is it," says Sam Slick, "that if you read a book to a man you set him to sleep? Just because it's a book, and the language ain't common. Why is it, if you talk to him, he will sit up all night with you? Just because it's talk, the language of nature."

Let me conclude with a good example of the benefits which may be derived from practice in a debating society. To one who knows what Curran was as an orator, his own account of his first attempt to make a speech at a debating club must be quite astonishing; and to one who is naturally timid, it must be uncommonly encouraging. An acquaintance of his, in speaking of eloquence, observed that it must have been born

with him. "Indeed, my dear sir," replied Curran, "it was not; it was born some three and twenty years and some months after me; and if you are satisfied to listen to a dull historian, you shall have the history of its nativity. When I was at the Temple, a few of us formed a little debating club. Upon the first night of meeting which I attended, my foolish heart throbbing with the anticipated honor of being styled 'the learned member who opened the debate,' or 'the very eloquent gentleman who has just sat down,' I stood up. The question was the Catholic claims or the slave trade, I protest I now forget which; but the difference, you know, was not very obvious—my mind was stored with about a folio volume of matter, but I wanted a preface, and for want of a preface the volume was never published. I stood up, trembling through every fibre; but remembering that in this I was but imitating Tully, I took courage, and had actually proceeded almost as far as 'Mr. Chairman,' when, to my astonishment and terror, I perceived that every eye was turned on me. There were only six or seven present, and the room could not have contained as many more; yet was it, to my panic-stricken imagination, as if I were the central object in nature, and assembled millions were gazing upon me in breathless expectation. I became dismayed and dumb. My friends cried, 'Hear him!' but there was nothing to hear. My lips indeed went through the pantomime of articulation; but I was like the unfortunate fiddler at the fair, who, upon coming to strike up the solo that was to ravish every ear, discovered that an enemy had maliciously soaped his bow. So you see, sir, it was not born with me. However, though my friends despaired of me"—they had nick-

named him Orator Mum—"the *cacoëthes loquendi* was not to be subdued without a struggle. I was for the present silenced, but I still attended the meetings with the most laudable regularity, and even ventured to accompany the others to a more ambitious theatre, the club of Temple Bar. One of them was upon his legs; a fellow of whom it was difficult to decide whether he was more distinguished for the filth of his person or the flippancy of his tongue—just such another as Harry Flood would have called 'the highly gifted gentleman with the dirty shirt and greasy pantaloons.' I found this learned personage in the act of culminating chronology by the most preposterous anachronisms. He descanted upon Demosthenes, the glory of the Roman forum—spoke of Tully as the famous contemporary and rival of Cicero—and, in the short space of one half hour, transported the Straits of Marathon three several times to the plains of Thermopylæ. Thinking that I had a right to know something of these matters, I looked at him with surprise. When our eyes met, there was something like a wager of battle in mine; upon which the erudite gentleman instantly changed his invective against antiquity into an invective against me, and concluded by a few words of friendly counsel (*horresco referens*) to 'Orator Mum,' who, he doubted not, possessed wonderful talents for eloquence, although he would recommend him to show it in future by some more popular method than his silence. I followed his advice, and, I believe, not entirely without effect. So, sir, you see that, to try the bird, the spur must touch his blood."

After this Curran took indefatigable pains to make himself a good speaker. He corrected his habit of

stuttering by reading aloud every day, slowly and distinctly, passages from his favorite authors; recited speeches and studied postures and gesticulations before a mirror; debated cases at home as if he were addressing a jury, and became a constant attendant at debating clubs.*

* It may perhaps be worth mentioning that at the present day debating societies are far more common in England and Scotland than in this country, and that they imitate the House of Commons so closely that they actually discuss the questions before the same in their own manner, the members designating each other the honorable member from such a city, and the right honorable member from such a county. The House of Commons is the great source of strength and power in England, its power being so great that it can abolish the monarchy by a vote.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### SOME ACCOUNT OF A BYGONE DEBATING SOCIETY.

IN the last chapter I spoke of the advantages of debate and debating societies. In this I shall give, by way of illustration, some personal reminiscences of a debating society to which I once belonged. Well do I remember that society, the first society I ever joined. It was called the "Franklin Debating Society," and met in one of the rooms of old Clinton Hall, New York, where now the fine new structure of the Mercantile Library stands. We met in Room No 7, second floor, a room which remains more distinctly in my mind than any other room in existence. Well do I remember the exciting debates we had in that room, and equally well the looks and tones of most of the speakers. The society was composed of some twenty-five young men; all of the middle class; all earning their bread in various useful occupations, and all striving to gain an education and a development of their powers such as would enable them to do good work in the world. The fire of ambition was glowing in most of those young hearts, and I know that many of them, filled with high hopes and noble aims, looked forward to the time when they would fill honorable and useful stations in the world. And some of them have done so.

What ambitious speeches we youngsters used to make in those

**Our salad days,**
**When we were green in judgment!**

How fluently and confidently we declaimed on subjects of which we knew nothing! What fiery harangues we poured out on slavery and freedom, on aristocracy and democracy; on the wrongs of Ireland and the injustice of England; on monarchy and republicanism; on Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth Queen of England; on Hannibal, Cæsar, Alexander, and Napoleon; on Junius, Tom Paine and the French revolutionists! We settled the world's affairs, past and present, in that little room in Clinton Hall, we youngsters did; and some of us imagined, I have no doubt, that we could have arranged things much better, had we had the chance, than the heroes and heroines whose actions we discussed.

We had our famous nights, too, as well as other deliberative bodies. No one that was present, for instance, on the night on which Tom Kelly made his brilliant speech on the banishment of Napoleon to St. Helena will ever forget it. He fairly flowed out in genuine, moving eloquence; he completely forgot himself in the intensity of his feeling; and, with a flood of indignation, he consigned to eternal infamy the remorseless British ministry that "dared to treat as a common criminal, and banish to a barren rock in the distant Pacific, a distinguished general and ruler of France, an unhappy warrior who had voluntarily surrendered himself to the victorious but ungenerous enemy!" Then we had our literary treats, rich and racy, which usually consisted of a batch of anonymous

communications, prose and poetry, and very personal, addressed to "The Editor," who read them aloud with all the energy and force he had at command; communications which, like Falstaff's speeches, were not only witty in themselves, but the cause of wit in others. Oh, those bright, joyful, happy days, when the world seemed rosy and beautiful, and hope animated every heart, how little we appreciated them! Such a period comes only once in a lifetime.

To me this was the golden age of life; the most hopeful, the most promising, and the most free from care. It is pleasant to me even now to recall those days. I never think of them but with renewed pleasure. "Remembrance," says Richter, "is the only Paradise from which we cannot be driven away." We had so far hardly known any serious care or trouble, and the future seemed all brightness. Our heroes were brilliant parliamentary orators and shining political leaders; our favorite authors were historians and dramatic poets, and our pastimes study, conversation, and dreams of future fame and fortune. I might say of those days what Cowley said of the pleasant days he spent with his friend Harvey:

> **We spent them not in toys, in lusts, or wine;**
> **But search of deep philosophy,**
> **Wit, eloquence, and poetry;**
> **Arts which I loved; for they, my friend, were thine.**

Many have observed that the realization of high hopes does not bring half so much pleasure as their anticipation; and this we found out, too. Schiller tells us of a certain king who, on his death-bed, was asked by his appointed successor what, in all the aspects of life, had given him most satisfaction—what was now, as the

curtain fell, his opinion of the great drama of life—upon which the dying king, opening his eyes, replied: "I have no satisfaction in any part of it—I have now nothing but contempt for everything that once seemed great and desirable to me."

There were some among those young orators who have since attained positions of importance in the world; and there are three or four whose career, not yet ended, will, I trust, shine all the brighter the nearer they approach its close. There were a few who, even then, were regarded among ourselves as persons of distinction; and we were confident that nothing but time and opportunity were needed to cause all the world to esteem them as much as we did. There was, for instance, the Critic, brave-hearted Michael Ducey, a bright, enthusiastic youth of seventeen or eighteen years, who declaimed in the style of Pitt, in high-flown and sonorous sentences, and who wrote such fearless and trenchant criticisms of the performances of the others, that he often roused the ire and gained the enmity of those whom he assailed. What a marvellously clever boy he was, and what a prodigious stock of learning he had at command! How my heart used to flutter when he rose to read his high-sounding criticisms! and with what admiration I used to listen to his grandiloquent speeches! I believe I used to look at him and listen to his speeches with as much admiration and respect as ever follower of Pitt or Fox looked at and listened to his great leader; and I believe most of the other members regarded him in the same way. He was our "head boy;" and I may say with Thackeray: "I have seen great men in my time, but never such a great one as that head boy of my boyhood; we

all thought he must become prime minister, and I was disappointed on meeting him in after life to find he was no more than six feet high."

A self-taught lad, earning his bread as a clerk in the law office of Richard Busteed, Esq., Corporation Counsel of New York, Ducey had acquired a considerable fund of literary and legal lore, and possessed such a marvellous fluency of speech, together with such an imposing air and tone in his delivery, that he seemed to me a born orator, destined to mould the minds of men and

**Th' applause of listening senates to command.**

But "past is all his fame; the very spot, where many a time he triumphed, is forgot." Clinton Hall has just been taken down, and a new and stately edifice put in its place.

When the Civil War broke out, Ducey entered the army, and fell in one of the first battles, leaving a widowed mother and many that loved him to mourn his untimely fate. Had he lived, he would, I am sure, have attained eminence in his profession.

There was Ducey's great opponent, the uneasy, irritable, fiery-tempered Cunningham, the Hotspur of the Society, who was always in trouble with somebody; and there was his opposite, the smooth-mannered and silver-tongued Smith, who was suspected, however, of being the author of half the anonymous communications to the Editor. There was the well-informed but impetuous and Church-loving Keiley, who never rose to address the meeting without speaking to the point and hitting the nail right on the head; so strong a speaker, that on whichever side Keiley went, Victory was almost sure to light. There, too, was the redoubtable Adam

Cameron, a short, strongly-built, dark-haired and dark-eyed lad, with a cool, witty, and fearless style of address, dreaded among us for his power in ridicule, and always strong in reply. I took good care to do my best whenever Cameron was to follow me; for I had felt his power; and dreaded him more than any other. He never seemed to make any preparation for the debate, and always looked as if he paid no attention to what was going on; but no sooner had he got on his feet, than he showed that he had been listening all the time, and that nothing had escaped him. He had quietly noted and weighed every argument pro and con, and had made up his mind which side to take and what to say. After toying with his opponents for a while, poking fun at one after another, he would come down on some one with such crushing logic that refutation was impossible. Ridicule, satire, wit—these were his forte. He knew that there is no better way of destroying the force of an argument than by making it ridiculous, and he had a knack of turning everything into ridicule. Many a time did he convulse the assembly by the farcical twist he would give to their arguments; many a time did he turn the most seemingly innocent observation in the world into the "height of the ridiculous." When, on one occasion, the question was, "Which is more beautiful, Nature or Art?" and some one spoke with admiration of Powers' Greek Slave, Cameron answered: "The gentleman has cited the statue of the Greek Slave as an example of supreme beauty. Well, it is very beautiful, and I admire it too; but who will deny that a handsome woman, *déshabillée*, is far more beautiful and far more interesting than the finest marble statue of a Greek slave or a Greek goddess? Will the

gentleman affirm that the cold marble can compare with the bewitching beauty of life? For my part, I would rather look on the real than on the imitation, on the perfection of nature than on the imperfection of art; and I am sure that even the modest admirer of the Greek Slave would, if he had a chance, prefer to gaze on the animate rather than on the inanimate form of beauty; on the ravishing lineaments of nature rather than the cold, timid, incomplete beauty of art." Such sallies were, of course, unanswerable.

Cameron subsequently attained wealth, station, and reputation as the inventor and manufacturer of the now celebrated Cameron Steam Pump; he became president of a bank, the owner of a great machine-shop, employing hundreds of workmen (and, by the way, I remember he gave 10 per cent. of his profits to his workmen), and attained power and influence in various circles. When he married, he made the grand tour of Europe in first-class style, staying for many months at the great centres of civilization, and enjoying all that wealth and leisure could afford.

Unfortunately, however, he had begun too late to take life easy, and did not live long to enjoy his success. Years before, he had, by working for nearly a whole week without rest or sleep at the repairing of some huge steam presses, contracted a pulmonary disease which he was never able to shake off, and died at the early age of thirty-three.

Then there was Tom Creamer—the tall, handsome, persuasive Tom—noted for the great sweep of his arm and the merry twinkle of his eye. Tom attained the highest political honors of any member of the Society,

having become State Senator and Member of Congress. He was at this time merely a clerk at the retail establishment of A. T. Stewart & Co., and I have heard that when Mr. Stewart dismissed him for some insubordinate act or word, Tom turned on him and exclaimed, defiantly, "Mr. Stewart, you will come and seek my assistance before I ever return to seek yours!" And this prediction was literally fulfilled; for when Tom entered the Senate he became a leader in that body, and Mr. Stewart, having a bill before the legislature in which he was particularly interested, came and asked Tom to aid him in getting it passed!

A great reader of romances and plays, Tom was not only a good debater, but a tolerably good actor; for I remember seeing him play with fair success the rôle of Othello in an amateur company. Subsequently he studied law; became a member of the New York bar; then an active politician and public speaker; a member of the Assembly; a member of the Senate; a member of Congress; and an influential adviser in Democratic counsels. It was he who led the Young Democracy that rebelled against Tweed, with the view of getting rid of the Boss and securing independent action in Democratic politics. Would that he had stuck to that side of the house! But, unhappily, Tweed, who was too strong for him, conquered; and the Young Democracy, with Tom at their head, fell into line. When Tweed was overthrown, Tom fell with him, the crash of 1873 swept away his fortune, and he was not again heard of for some time. I remember hearing him say, in his prosperous days, "If you want to make a fortune, go and buy some of those duck-ponds around Central

Park: they will turn you in more gold than the lamp of Aladdin!" Unfortunately, the duck-ponds took another turn in 1873, and worked the other way! Tom, however, is still in the prime of life, and may yet be capable of great things.

There, too, was Tom Stapleton, whose single effort at eloquence earned him, if I mistake not, the sobriquet of "Single-speech Stapleton!" Of his subsequent career I know nothing. And there was Johnnie Nagle, whose striking, manly figure and modest demeanor are the most notable things about him that remain in my memory. Johnnie has since earned an enviable reputation as a physician and health-inspector, and is now, I believe, Dr. John Nagle, Health Officer of the City of New York.

Last, but not least, there was yet another—

**A dearer one**
**Still, and a nearer one**
**Yet than all other;—**

whose name I scarcely dare to mention, so painful are the emotions which his unhappy fate still excites in the breasts of his kindred; but whom I cannot leave altogether unnoticed—a bright, manly, handsome youth, who bore an honorable part in the proceedings, and who was esteemed and loved by every member of the Society; whose energetic and upright character seemed to mark him out for a successful and beneficent career, and whose kindly and genial nature, endearing him to all who knew him, will cause his name long to be remembered: I mean my unfortunate brother, David B. Waters, whose tragic fate at the burning of the Academy of Music suddenly ended the happiest period

of my life, and cast a mournful shadow over the lives of all who were near and dear to him.

> **For men must work, and women must weep,**
> **Though storms be sudden, and waters deep,**
> **And the harbor bar be moaning.**

Oh, happy, innocent, ambitious days! would that I could call you back and live you over again, with a little of the wisdom I have since learned from sad experience! But that cannot be, and no doubt it is well as it is.



## CHAPTER XV.

ROMANCE IN REAL LIFE—AN ILLUSTRATION.

WE seldom think so highly of those things that occur before our eyes as of those of which we read. Scenes drawn from the imagination seem to captivate us more than those drawn from nature. This is not merely because "distance lends enchantment to the view," but because we like what appeals strongly to the mind, and because the poet or the novelist, who is the true seer of things, has the happy faculty of narrating or describing fictitious events in a way that makes them more interesting and attractive than real ones. Even in real life it is only the poet who sees the "true inwardness" of things, and shows us the meaning, the motive, the object of actions and events which we were unable to see for ourselves.

Robert Browning says, most beautifully:

**For don't you mark, we're made so that we love**
**First when we see them painted, things we have passed**
**Perhaps a hundred times, nor cared to see:**
**And so they are better painted,—better to us,**
**Which is the same thing. Art was given for that—**
**God used us to help each other so,**
**Leading our minds out. Have you noticed now**
**Your scullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,**
**And, trust me, but you should though. How much more**
**If I drew higher things with the same truth?**
**That were to take the Prior's pulpit place—**
**Interpret God to all of you!**

A single incident sets the poet's imagination a-going, and he sees, at once, by intuition, the whole history preceding and succeeding the incident, or the whole chain of events to which the incident gives rise. And just as the sculptor, in order to make his work look life-like, makes a statue which is to be seen from a distance larger than life, so does the dramatist exaggerate to a certain extent the powers and passions of his characters, that they may strike all the more forcibly or seem all the more natural to the spectator.

"If you could only see the hearts of people," says Varnhagen von Ense, "you would find romance in the meanest hut." We are constantly surrounded by wonderful things and wonderful occurrences which we are unable to see; whole three-volume novels are passing every day before our eyes without our being aware of them. When you come into a company of gay people, and hear them talk, laugh, joke, and sing, you think you know all about them; but how little you know of their *interior* history, of the secret aims, plans, hopes, and fears going on before you! It is sometimes discovered, when the truth is known, that those who were looked upon as the happiest people in the world were really the most wretched.

"There will always be romance in the world," says Bovee, "so long as there are young hearts in it." This is proved by the fact that most of us, after years have cleared our vision, perceive that we were, in our youth, witnesses of or participants in events of a romantic nature, events worthy of being told, and now looked upon as far more interesting than those occurring around us. To the aged, the romance of life is always in the past. They saw great things and great men in

their day; but there are none such now. Seldom, however, do we find one able to report well what he has seen. More wonderful lives have been lived than ever have been told. A good reporter of life-scenes is rare. Ask any one of your acquaintance to tell you what he saw at the last ball or party, and note what an insipid, superficial affair he makes of it! "Yes, there were nice people there—some good dancing, charades, tableaux, and a nice supper—people talked a good deal, danced a good deal, and laughed a good deal—music very nice, ladies dressed very nice, and everything very nice indeed." Such a reporter has not the wit to see that the narration or description of a single incident would characterize the gathering much more effectually than any general account like this; for his account might as well be applied to any other ball or party as to this one.

"Romance," says Ewing, "is the child of reality." Most of our best novelists and poets have been inspired by real events. Goethe declares himself that all his poems are the outcome of certain experiences and events in his own life, and we know that his fictitious characters are all drawn from life. In fact, he says that no character in fiction will bear examination, if not drawn from life. The same is also the case with the characters of Fielding, Smollett, and Goldsmith: they are all people whom they knew in life. "To know truly," says Mr. Whipple, "is vividly to reproduce what is experienced. Knowledge, like religion, must be *experienced* to be known."

Many a time, in my own experience, have I been witness to incidents which might, I have thought, in the hands of a skilful novelist or poet, have been

turned to good account. I could see the form or figure of a work of art, but had not the wit or the power to chisel it into shape.

Here, for instance, is an incident of comparatively recent occurrence, which, though homely enough in itself, has something to my mind charming in its simplicity and unexpectedness. But, before telling it, and in order to whet the reader's appetite for my story, I shall narrate another romantic incident which my own has called to mind; an incident in the life of a famous writer, which, though real, is as striking as anything conceived by a novelist. I had it from a gentleman whom I knew in Paris, though I do not know whence he derived it—probably from one of the works of the writer in question.

It is well known that Jean Jacques Rousseau had, in his youth, like Gil Blas de Santillane, suffered many hardships and experienced many vicissitudes at the hands of Fortune; and among the various situations which he filled in his younger days was that of waiter in a gentleman's family at Lyons. His master was a man of wealth and rank, and often entertained people of high station at his house. One day, while his master and mistress were entertaining a large party of courtly friends at dinner, a discussion arose as to the meaning of one of the paintings which adorned the walls of the banqueting hall, a painting representing some scene in Grecian mythology or ancient history; when the host, seeing the discussion was likely to take an unprofitable turn, and that not one among the guests had any real knowledge of the matter, turned to Jean Jacques, whom he knew, and who was standing, napkin in hand, behind the chair of one of the guests,

and asked *him* to explain the matter. Thus appealed to, the serving-man, much to the surprise of the noble company, gave a clear and concise account of the whole matter, an account so plain and particular that it settled the dispute at once and forever.

"In what school have you studied, monsieur?" said one of the guests, addressing himself to Jean Jacques.

"I have studied in many schools, monseigneur," replied he; "but the school in which I studied longest and learned most is the school of adversity."

That was a school, indeed, of which most of that audience knew little; but they were destined to know more before long, especially through the exertions of this very man, whom they little suspected to be the greatest genius of his day and country, and destined to make all Europe ring with the fame of his writings. Jean Jacques had been listening to the talk of these noble and courtly people, and was silently making his observations and taking the measure of their abilities when he was called upon to speak. Not one of them ever suspected that there was "a chiel amang them takin' notes," and not one of them had the wit to see, in this dinner-table episode, the handwriting on the wall, foretelling their coming doom.

It was to Rousseau's "Emile" that Carlyle referred when he made his scathing retort to a young aristocratic fop who, in a London assembly, expressed his contempt of books that contained nothing but theories and opinions. "In the last century," said Carlyle, with a look of grim scorn, "there lived a man in France who wrote a book that contained nothing but theories and opinions, which the nobility of that day declared to be all stuff and nonsense; but it is an incident of

history that their skins went to the binding of the second edition of that book!"

There is one instance of homage to genius—one of the most noble and knightly I ever read—which I must mention before beginning my humble story. After one of Mademoiselle Rachel's marvellous tragedy-queen performances at the Imperial Palace at Saint Petersburg, the Emperor Nicholas, who was present, was coming forward to greet her, when she rose to receive him. "Nay, mademoiselle, keep your seat," said the great Emperor, "we actual sovereigns must ever give way to the sovereigns of art; for they live and reign long after we are forgotten!"

Now for my story. I came home one day from school, at the usual hour, when I found some ladies and a youth of eighteen, one of my former scholars, visiting my wife and children. I began to tell them of a beautiful song which one of my teachers was instructing her scholars to sing; a song which seemed to me so touching, that the first time I heard it my heart throbbed with emotion, and my eyes filled with tears. Then I took the song out of my pocket—for I had asked the teacher to give me a copy of it—and began reading it aloud. When I had finished reading it, my little daughter Alice, who is ten years old, exclaimed,—

"Why, papa, Frederika can sing that song!"

Now Frederika is a young girl who had lately been engaged as "help" in our family, and my little daughter had become very fond of her. She is American born, of honest German parentage, and was educated at one of our public schools—a very pleasant, good-looking, intelligent girl, with blonde hair and blue eyes, a charming voice, and an agreeable manner.

"Can she?" I exclaimed. "Well, we shall ask Frederika to sing it. Frederika!" I cried, in a louder voice, directed toward the kitchen, "would you be so good as to sing that song for us?"

Frederika, who had from her place in the kitchen heard me narrate the whole story, hesitated for a moment: she didn't like to sing before an audience, she said; but, after a little pressing on the part of my daughter, she sang out in charming, yet quiet, sweet tones the following little song, while all the company listened in curious yet pleased surprise:

THE UNFINISHED PRAYER.

"'Now I lay me'—say it, darling!"
"Lay me," lisped the tiny lips
Of my daughter, kneeling, bending
O'er her folded finger-tips.
"Down to sleep"—"To sleep," she murmured,
And the curly head dropped low.
"I pray the Lord," I gently added—
"You can say it all, I know."
"Pray the Lord,"—the words came faintly,
More faintly still—"my soul to keep"—
Then the tired head fairly nodded,
And the child was fast asleep!
But the dewy eyes half opened,
And I clasped her to my breast,
When the dear voice softly whispered,
"Mamma, God knows all the rest!"

You may imagine what a pleasant surprise this was to me, and to us all. We felt as if we had been entertaining an angel unawares; and I couldn't help thinking, and saying to my wife afterwards, "That little girl is worth more to us than the work she can do; she will be a pleasant companion to our children." And from

that day we treated her as a friend, not as a servant; she dined at our table, and went with the children wherever they went; and this contined for a period of three years.

But the influence of that song did not end here. It had a still more fascinating effect on the youth who was present on that occasion. This youth, who had just graduated from the Academy, and had entered the business of his father, a prosperous New York merchant, took due note of the gifted maiden, and soon found occasion to improve his acquaintance with her. As she lived with us as one of ourselves, this of course presented no great difficulty, and his parents being perfectly aware of his intention, we put no obstacle in his way. He often came to our house after that day; and although many of the young ladies of his own circle, well-to-do, well connected, and well educated, would have given their little finger to have secured his attentions, he neglected them all for that little maiden who sang the beautiful song; who captivated him first through the ears, then through the eyes, and finally through the mind; and I received this morning an invitation to the wedding of that youth and that maiden, to take place this day fortnight at the "little church 'round the corner." Who will say there is no romance in real life?

## CHAPTER XVI.

### OTHER CONCEPTIONS OF GENIUS.

I KNOW that many persons have a very different conception of genius from that which I have presented in this essay. I have already spoken of Mr. Howell's notion; but we shall leave him out of consideration at present. Many consider none but the very greatest men deserving of the name of men of genius; none but those who have helped to shape the character of their age, or who have produced the greatest work of their age. Homer, Pericles, Demosthenes; Virgil, Horace, Cicero; Hannibal, Cæsar, Alexander; Michael Angelo, Raffael, Rubens; Dante, Cervantes, Byron; Lessing, Goethe, Schiller; Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton; Corneille, Racine, Molière; Voltaire, Pascal, Descartes; Burns, Scott, Coleridge; Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton; Wellington, Napoleon, Grant; Irving, Emerson, Whittier; Webster, Clay, Calhoun, and such brilliant stars of the first magnitude, are the only names they consider worthy of being classed as those of men of genius. This, however, is, in my opinion, very arbitrary and very unsatisfactory. There are degrees in genius as in other things; greater lights and lesser lights; some burning with a dazzling brilliancy, and some with a serene, mild, yet steady blaze. "All ex-

perience shows," says Archbishop Whately, "that different persons have different degrees of ability;" and all experience shows that different men of genius have different degrees of genius. "The power of one man over another," says Dr. John Brown, "is proportioned to bulk—for we hold to the notion of a bigness in souls as well as in bodies, and that one soul differs from another in quantity and momentum as well as in quality and force."

Genius, therefore, is ability of a high order; or, if you please, of an uncommon order; but who shall say, by exact measurement, of what height or of what breadth? Who shall say, precisely, which of the large number of able men who figure in history were men of genius and which were not? For I hold that not only he who writes an epic poem, paints a beautiful picture, plans a successful campaign, or remodels a failing government; not only he who conceives and carries through parliament wise measures for the relief of a nation, or creates a new literature for its edification and delectation; but he who invents a sewing-machine or a telephone, who makes some grand discovery adding to the knowledge or welfare of mankind, is possessed with the attribute of genius. It is the *successful application of mind to any problem* that is the proof of genius.

It is all nonsense to talk of the "divine afflatus" that moves the minds and distinguishes the works of men of genius: the "divine afflatus" would be of little value to any man if the possessor of it did not do something worthy or useful; and it is very much of a question, which *is* the divine afflatus, the energy that causes the mind to work, or the action of the mind itself. "I know no great men," says Voltaire, "except those who

have rendered great services to the human race." Men are measured by what they do; not by what they seem or possess. They are judged by results; and judging by results, I say there are hundreds, nay thousands in the pages of history who have done such things as entitle them to the name and fame of men of genius.

If I should set down from memory a score of those which I consider the most distinguished names in history, I am sure that some readers would say that I had left out greater names than those I had mentioned; for those whose studies have lain in a different direction from mine would consider others, with whose lives and works they are more familiar, of greater importance. After those I have mentioned above, I should set down, for instance, as among the greatest names: Plato, Socrates, Herodotus; Seneca, Tacitus, Antoninus; Copernicus, Kepler, Newton; Wickliffe, Luther, Columbus; Cromwell, Clive, Marlborough; Dryden, Bunyan, Defoe; Pope, Swift, Addison; Chatham, Fox, Mirabeau; Garrick, Siddons, Macready; Reynolds, Turner, Ruskin; Nelson, Napier, Perry; Chantrey, Flaxman, Story; Wesley, Whitfield, Chalmers; Brougham, Peel, Gladstone; Hume, Gibbon, Macaulay; Prescott, Motley, Bancroft; Burke, Buckle, Tennyson; George Eliot, Mathew Arnold, Fenimore Cooper; Fielding, Dickens, Thackeray; Kemble, Booth, Kean; Huxley, Tyndall, Darwin; Herbert Spenser, Louis Agassiz, Horace Mann; Rousseau, Diderot, Madame de Stael; Horace Greeley, Charles Sumner, Wendell Phillips; Holmes, Longfellow, Bryant; Moltke, Bismarck, Wolseley; Farragut, Stanton, Thomas; Lesseps, Stanley, Field.

Would any competent person deny that these are all men of genius? And yet how different in degree and

how various in quality was their genius! Some would, perhaps, be in favor of dividing these names into those of the first, the second, and the third class; but even then they would hardly deny them genius. Some, again, would say they were all men of the first class; and yet it would be easy for me to turn to a biographical dictionary, and put down as many more, or ten times as many more, names of men and women of almost equal brilliancy and power. In fact, if I did that, I would hardly know where to stop. There is Victor Hugo, for instance, whom I forgot: Swinburne would place *him* above them all; and there is Toussaint L'Ouverture, whom I never thought of, but whom Wendell Phillips places above the greatest military and political heroes of modern times.*

Some will say, Part of these are men of talent, and part men of genius. Possibly; but what is talent, and what is genius? Men of talent are those clever men who amuse, entertain, and charm society by their witty,

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* M. Comte, the author of the Positive Philosophy, has compiled what he calls "The New Calendar of Great men," in which he has set down between five and six hundred names of worthies of all ages and nations, classified under thirteen heads. This calendar was drawn up with the view of supplanting the saints of the Catholic calendar with men who have really advanced the cause of civilization and human development. "His list of heroes and benefactors of mankind," says Mr. John Stuart Mill, "includes not only every important name in the scientific movement, from Thales of Miletus to Fourier the mathematician and Blauville the biologist, and, in the æsthetic, from Homer to Manzoni, but the most illustrious names in the annals of the various religions and philosophies, and the really great politicians in all states of society." And yet he has left out Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, and the Earl of Chatham!

tactful, and lively conversation; who succeed in business, acquire wealth and influence in the world, a position in society, and power in political or fashionable circles. Men of genius may do all or none of these things; but one thing they must do: they must add something new to the world's store of good things; they must give the world something it never had before; they must increase the world's happiness in some way. The place of the man of talent can always be supplied; that of the man of genius never. Hence the absurdity of the remark of Canova's neighbor, who, when the sculptor died, asked his brother if he was "going to carry on the business!" A man of talent may write a bright poem, a fascinating novel, or a clever historical work; but only a man of genius can produce a Childe Harold, an Ivanhoe, or a History like that of Buckle or Macaulay. "In the work of a man of genius," says an anonymous writer, "there is always something preëminently his own, unborrowed from any one else; he gives the world something that was not there before; he creates something new and original."

Now, judged by this standard, which of the above-named men was not a man of genius? which of them has not given the world something new, something it had not known before? They have all either done something or produced something the world knew not before; and if not their thoughts, their deeds still live, and resound along the ages, influencing for good or ill the countless thousands into whose ears their words or deeds are constantly poured.

Schopenhauer, who considered only the very greatest names those of men of genius, thus illustrates by a pretty fable his idea of a man of genius. There are a

dozen men firing at a target three hundred yards off. Some send several shots within the rings of the target; some send half a dozen shots into the bull's eye, and one hits the bull's eye every time; while one, who pays no attention to the others, and is laughed at whenever he fires, never hits the target at all. This last man, who is so much ridiculed by the others, goes contentedly away, without making a single remark; and it is found, long afterwards, that he had been firing at a target a thousand yards farther off than the one they had been firing at, and that he had put his ball into the bull's eye of this distant target every time! This is Schopenhauer's man of genius; the others were ordinary, geniusless mortals! This conception is, I must confess, striking; but it illustrates merely the *order* of ability of many a man of genius as compared with that of those around him. William of Orange, Lord Chatham, Von Stein, Count Cavour, and Abraham Lincoln were preëminently men of this stamp: they saw what their contemporaries did not or could not see; they saw what was the great thing to be done, and did it; and their aims were so broad, deep, and far-reaching that they could not be appreciated in their own day, and needed time to bring out all the greatness of their genius. William was the first king of England to see that a constitutional government, a government in which the representatives of the people should hold the great powers of the State and should determine what policy to pursue, was a necessity; that it was the only government that would last in England, and that it was the wisest and safest government for all concerned. He was the first to form a ministry from the leading men in parliament of either party, and to pursue a

policy such as parliament would endorse. Chatham's generous support of Frederick of Prussia, his strong measures against France and Spain, his liberal government of the Colonies, his large projects for the extension of British commerce, his early plans for the reform of the House of Commons, and for placing India under the government of the Crown, were all the acts of a wise and far-seeing statesman, ratified and approved by subsequent generations. Von Stein saw that nothing could be done in Prussia until its serf-peasants were freed, educated, and drilled into good soldiers; until they were made to feel and understand that they had a home and a country to fight for; and it was this statesman's persistent efforts in this direction, so little appreciated in his own day, that laid the foundation of Germany's present greatness. Cavour's advocacy of a constitutional government; his alliance with England; his promotion of free trade and of English methods in commerce and agriculture, paved the way for Garibaldi, and finally led to a free and united Italy. And to Lincoln's calm and statesmanlike policy, the success of the Federal cause in the late Civil War is largely owing; for in the midst of that war, when everybody was talking of compromise, arrangement, reconciliation, separation, and what not, Lincoln firmly declared that a house divided against itself could not stand; that either slavery or the government must be destroyed; and that there could be no possible compromise upon this which would not put us under again, and leave us all our work to do over again. And he was right. We now see how wisely he acted; but many of us could not see it then. These, therefore, were all far-seeing statesmen, true marksmen, who hit the distant target every time.

But it would be a serious error to consider none but such wonderful marksmen as possessing genius; for this would exclude many men of the finest mental calibre of nearly every class. The man who hit the bull's eye every time at three hundred yards had his portion of genius—how many can do even that?—as well as the long-range marksman; and the Stantons and Chases and Sewards who surrounded Lincoln had theirs as well as their master. Seward thought the Rebellion could be suppressed in ninety days, which showed that he belonged to the short-range marksmen; but who that is acquainted with the life and labors of that eminent statesman will deny him genius? Was it not he that proclaimed the "irrepressible conflict" between slave and free labor? Was it not he that bought Alaska for $7,000,000, which all the world now acknowledges to have been a master-stroke of policy? If we should so measure men, not only many able orators, statesmen, and writers would be excluded from the assembly of genius, but men of the highest order of ability of every class; all our great actors, singers, and musicians, for instance. What! were Garrick, Kean, Siddons, Booth, Davenport, Cushman, Mathews, Jefferson, and Sothern devoid of genius? And those gifted artists who have held such countless multitudes spell-bound for generations by their rare talents, Paganini, Thalberg, Ole Bull. Damrosch, Sontag, Jenny Lind, Patti, and the rest—

> **Those souls**
> **Whose sudden visitation daze the world,**
> **Vanish like lightning, and leave behind**
> **A name that in the distance far away**
> **Wakens the youth of slumbering ages—**

shall these be counted out from the noble assembly of

genius? Nay, you might as well exclude Apollo from the council of the gods. I hold that every uncommonly gifted person, no matter of what class or of what calling, is a man or woman of genius, and cannot be placed in any other category.

Of Schopenhauer's far-seeing men of genius, there are two examples in Middle Age history which, I think, would have suited his fancy exactly. I shall conclude with an illustrative episode in the lives of these men, neither of whom produced anything in the way of art, literature, or science; yet both of whom possessed Schopenhauer's mark of genius. These two men are Frederick the Second of Germany and Malak el Kameel, the Saracen Sultan of anti-crusader fame. Frederick was a statesman who knew how to govern; he was fond of all noble studies, was one of the first to bring Saracen learning to Europe, and hated nothing more than war and bloodshed. The Pope having forced him to undertake a crusade against the Saracens, he collected an army, and set out for the East. He had not gone far before his army was attacked by the pestilence, and he returned in haste to Italy; but the threats and anathemas of the Pope compelled him to set out again. On arriving at Jerusalem, he expressed a desire to have a talk with the Saracen commander before coming to blows. Like the noble Brutus, he believed in "words before blows." The two men came together, and no sooner had they exchanged a few sentences with each other, than each saw that the other was a man of superior intelligence and of noble character. They had a long, free, and open-hearted talk, in which they exchanged views on government, religion, society, the rights of man, and so on—a talk such as two enlightened princes

of the present day might have had on similar subjects. The result of this talk was a treaty, by which the Moslem agreed to a cessation of hostilities for ten years, the delivery of Jerusalem and the surrounding territory to Frederick (with the exception of a single mosque on the site of the old temple), and the free and safe passage of pilgrims to and from the Holy Land.

Thus the whole object of the expedition was secured without shedding a drop of blood; and Frederick, thinking he had done a good thing, and well pleased with his work, turned his face homeward and in due time reached Europe with his army in safety. No sooner, however, had the Pope heard of his proceedings, than he set up a hideous cry of treason to the faith, betrayal of the Church, compounding with the infidel, and what not, declaring that Frederick should have had no dealings with the infidel, but have smitten him hip and thigh, and spoiled his country as Gideon of old spoiled the Philistines; and he reaffirmed the sentence of excommunication, condemned him to a thousand pains and penalties, and persecuted him almost to death.

Posterity, however, has ratified the conduct of Frederick and the Moslem as wise and statesmanlike, and condemned that of the Pope and his adherents as narrow, bigoted, and cruel.* And posterity, no less than

* To show the remarkable enlightenment and liberality of this Middle Age emperor, Frederick II., who died in 1250, let me quote two sentences from the Encyclopedia Britannica: "The appeal to Christendom with which Frederick met the Church's fulmination is remarkable in this, that not contenting himself with defending his own conduct, he denounced the temporal pretensions of the Pope as menacing all Christendom with an 'unheard-of

Schopenhauer, must regard them both as men of real genius, far-seeing and skilful marksmen, who hit the bull's eye of the distant target every time.

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tyranny,' and asserted that, instead of rolling in wealth and aspiring to worldly influence, the Church's representatives ought to cultivate the simplicity and self-denial of the early Christians. . . . In the interval of peace which followed, Frederick occupied himself in forming for his Sicilian kingdom a code of laws, the main features of which were: the superseding of irresponsible feudal and ecclesiastical jurisdictions by a uniform civil legislation, administered under direct imperial control; the toleration extended to Jews and Mahometans, and the severe enactments against schismatics; the provisions for the emancipation of the peasants; the regulations for the encouragement of commerce, which contain perhaps the first enunciation of the modern doctrine of free trade; and the establishment of annual parliaments, consisting of barons, prelates and representatives from the towns and cities." No wonder he was persecuted by the Church, stigmatized as an infidel, and accused of all the crimes in the calendar! Frederick was one of the pioneers of the Reformation and modern liberty of thought.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### MEN OF TRUE GREATNESS.

"THE true test of a great man," says Lord Brougham, "is his having been in advance of his age." This is only another way of expressing Schopenhauer's idea of a great man, or rather of a man of genius—for the terms are not always synonymous—namely, one who aims far, who works for a future as well as for the present age. Most men of genius have been in advance of their age; most of them have attempted things which the men of their age thought foolish or impossible of attainment: many of them have laid down principles which found no favor in the eyes of the men of their age, but which were eagerly adopted and put into practice by the men of subsequent ages.

Perhaps no better example of a great man of this stamp can be found than Sir Thomas More, Henry the Eighth's Chancellor, and author of the famous "Utopia." In this work, which is a description of an imaginary commonwealth, and which was conceived and written in the early part of the sixteenth century, an age in which all Christendom was still groaning under the most barbarous laws and the most cruel despotism, its author anticipates the most important social and politi-

cal changes of modern times, and expresses opinions which are still far in advance of the current opinion of the present day. He saw that the society around him was "nothing but a conspiracy of the rich against the poor;" that the rich "take to their own use and profit, at the lowest possible price, the work and labor of the poor;" and that "as soon as the rich decide" on certain devices "to rob the poor," they make laws in the name of the people to do it. He saw that the existence to which the labor class was doomed was "a life so wretched that even a beast's life seems enviable" in comparison. "In this imaginary commonwealth," says Mr. Green, in his excellent History of the English People, "the aim of legislation is to secure the welfare, social, industrial, intellectual, religious, of the community at large, and of the labor class in particular, as the true basis of a well-ordered commonwealth. The end of its labor laws was simply the welfare of the laborer. Goods were possessed indeed in common, but labor was compulsory with all. The period of toil was shortened to the nine hours demanded by modern artisans, with a view to the intellectual improvement of the worker. . . . A public system of education enabled the Utopians to avail themselves of their leisure; for while in England half of the population 'could read no English,' every child was well taught in Utopia." The Utopians were well aware of the connection between public morality and individual health, and their houses were built so as to afford all the benefits to be derived from light, air, and cleanliness. Their religion, too, rested on nature and reason; they held that God's design was the happiness of man, and that the ascetic rejection of human delights, save for the

common good, was thanklessness to the Giver. And, above all, they proclaimed the great principle of religious toleration, and held it lawful for every man to be of what religion he pleased.

The author of this wonderful book was the first, too, to point out the fact that punishment is less effective in suppressing crime than measures of prevention; that education is one of the great factors in the prevention of crime; and that it is an outrage to punish simple theft the same as murder. The end of all punishment he declares to be reformation, "nothing else but the destruction of vice and the saving of men;" and he advises "so to use and order criminals that they cannot choose but be good; and what harm soever they did before, the residue of their lives should be so ordered as to make amends for the same." Lastly, he points out, that punishment, to be remedial, must be wrought out by labor and hope, so that the criminal will not be left in despair of ever again recovering his former position in society.

Here, indeed, was a man of genius; here was a great man, capable of the largest, the most liberal, the most enlightened views of society. No man of his day shot so far and so unerringly into the future as he; no man of his day looked at society with so discriminating, so penetrating, and so prophetic an eye. What a pity that such a man should fall a victim to the blind hatred and narrow bigotry of a cruel and remorseless prince; what a pity that such a man was not allowed to carry out his humane and enlightened views among his own countrymen! But that age was not worthy of him; a prophet is not honored in his own country; and, being incapable of appreciating him or his measures,

his countrymen left him to his fate, the gallows. They had to go on learning by suffering and sorrow for many generations before they could come up to him.

"When I asked you for anecdotes upon the age of this king," says Voltaire, writing to a friend for material for his History of Louis XIV., "I referred less to the king himself than to the arts which flourished in his reign. I should prefer details relating to Racine and Boileau, to Quinault, Sully, Molière, Lebrun, Bossuet, Poussin, Descartes, and others, than to the battle of Steinkirk. Nothing but a name remains of those who commanded battalions and fleets; nothing results to the human race from a hundred battles gained; but the great men of whom I have spoken prepared pure and durable delights for generations unborn. A canal that connects two seas, a picture by Poussin, a beautiful tragedy, a discovered truth, are things a thousand times more precious than all the annals of the court, than all the narratives of war. You know that with me great men rank first; heroes last. I call great men those who have excelled in the useful or the agreeable. The ravagers of provinces are mere heroes."

This is the language of a wise man, the clear perception of a man of sense and knowledge. No man understood true greatness better than Voltaire. "Not long ago," he says in another place, "a distinguished company were discussing the trite and frivolous question, which was the greatest man, Cæsar, Alexander, Tamerlane, or Cromwell? Somebody answered that Isaac Newton was undoubtedly greater than any of them. This person was right; for if true greatness consists in having received from heaven a powerful understanding and in using it to enlighten one's self

and all others, then such a man as Newton, who is hardly to be met with once in a thousand years, is in truth the great man. . . . It is to him who frees our minds by the light of truth, not to those who enslave us by violence; it is to him who understands the universe, not to those who disfigure it, that we owe our reverence."

All those who possess the power of making some new discovery, of perceiving why and how some beneficial work is to be done, and who have the energy to go to work in the doing of it, are men of genius. This latter quality is the very essence of what we call genius; for that sudden inspiration, that blaze of thought by which a discovery is made, a truth is revealed, a grand enterprise is suggested, is fruitless without the energy to proclaim or prosecute it. A trifling circumstance may give rise to the inspiration; but only cool, steady, energetic work will bring it to perfection. A single remark, dropped by an unknown person in the street, led to the successful story of "The Breadwinners;" a hymn chanted by the bare-footed friars in the temple of Jupiter at Rome, led to the famous "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire;" a short poem, "Darkness," by Lord Byron, suggested Pollock's "Course of Time;" but what use would these things be, if their authors were not workers? Sometimes a trifling incident, unobserved and neglected by all others, causes the eye of genius to see, as by a flash, the plan and proportions of some magnificent structure. I have read of a civil engineer whose first conception of the splendid suspension bridge which he erected came from observing the manner in which a spider threw her web across an arbor in his garden; and of a mechanical inventor

whose first conception of a valuable wool-combing machine was suggested by observing the manner in which his daughter carried her hand backward and forward while combing her hair. The idea comes like a flash; but its realization is the result of slow and measured labor. Peter the Great, while one day looking about among some old ship-stores and other neglected effects, chanced to cast his eye upon the hulk of a small English sloop, with its sailing tackle, lying among the rest of the lumber, and fast going to decay. This vessel, which was the first of the kind he had ever seen, immediately became in his mind the germ of a great national marine; and he never rested until he had built a navy which could compete with almost any other in Europe.

Genius is simply mental power applied to practical objects; and this power is acquired, or at least brought to bear, by vigorous training and constant practice. Neither Shakespeare nor Milton, Dante nor Goethe, would ever have done anything uncommon had they not been diligent students and ceaseless workers. It is morally certain that Shakespeare was an omnivorous reader and an all-embracing student; and we know that Goethe spent his life in self-culture. It is certain that Shakespeare wrote many things before he composed "Hamlet;" and we know that Milton studied all literature, acquired many languages, and wrote a cart-load of books, before he composed "Paradise Lost."

Most of those who make great fortunes in business are men of genius. They have that rare power of organization, combination, and foresight which characterizes the successful general, and which the multitude lack. "That this talent for organization and manage-

ment," says Andrew Carnegie, himself a practical example of the truth, "is rare among men, is proved by the fact that it invariably secures for its possessor enormous rewards, no matter where or under what laws and conditions it is exhibited."

A man of genius is not simply a man of uncommon gifts who employs those gifts to dazzle the world and advance his own interests; but a man of uncommon gifts who feels that he has a calling, a mission to fulfil; who is animated by the desire to do some great good thing for the benefit of his fellow-men; who sees something unfitting in the order of things around him, and burns with the desire to right them; who is possessed with the idea that there is some special work for him to do, and who never spares himself in the doing of it. Such a man, whose genius is sanctified by human sympathy, never thinks of money-getting; rather, like Agassiz, he has "no time to make money." If he ever thinks of reward, it is perhaps the pleasure of seeing those in light who were once in darkness, or those in comfort who were once in misery. Men of genius do not, as a general thing, make money. "Genius," says Whipple, "may almost be defined as the faculty of acquiring poverty." It is the men of talent who make money out of the work of the men of genius. Somebody has truly said, that the greatest works have brought the least benefit to their authors. They were beyond the reach of appreciation before appreciation came. The benefactors of mankind have never stooped to the quest of lucre. Who can conceive of Socrates or Saint Paul, Martin Luther or John Wesley, John Hampden or George Washington, scheming to make money?

"The Vicar of Wakefield," says G. W. Curtis, "was

sold, through Dr. Johnson's mediation, for sixty pounds; and ten years after, the author died. With what love do we hang over its pages! What springs of feeling it has opened! Goldsmith's books are influences and friends forever; yet the five thousandth copy was never announced, and Oliver Goldsmith, M. B., often wanted a dinner! Horace Walpole, the coxcomb of literature, smiled at him contemptuously from his gilded carriage. Goldsmith struggled cheerfully with his adverse fate, and died. But then sad mourners, whom he had aided in their affliction, gathered around his bed; and a lady of distinction, whom he had only dared to admire at a distance, came and cut a lock of his hair for remembrance. When I see Goldsmith, thus carrying his heart in his hand like a palm-branch, I look on him as a successful man, whom adversity could not bring down from the level of his lofty nature."

I have in my mind's eye at this moment the editor of a little weekly paper, published in New York city, a paper which advocates unpopular doctrines, all aimed at the more equal or less unequal distribution of wealth and the amelioration of the sad condition of certain of the working classes,—this man, I say, though he makes no money by his enterprise, though he has lost the earnings of a life-time in it, and is laughed at as a crank by most of his contemporaries, is eminently a man of genius. After twenty-five years of brilliant leader-writing for the New York press, he suddenly quits it, and devotes all his energies to this new and noble enterprise of lifting the down-trodden laborer and artisan to a higher level in life. Though he has had but indifferent success; though neither the ill-rewarded workman nor the wealthy idler appreciates his labors; though he may

die poor and friendless, and pitied by the prosperous ones of this world; yet Posterity will undoubtedly give him his due, and award him an honorable place among those rare marksmen of genius who have aimed at and hit the distant target of fate.*

**Unto each man his handiwork, unto each his crown,**
**The just Fate gives;**
**Whoso takes the world's life on him, and his own lays down,**
**He, dying so, lives.**

"When real history shall be written by the truthful and the wise," says Mr. Ingersoll, "the kneelers at the shrines of chance and fraud, the brazen idols once worshipped as gods, shall be the very food of scorn; while those who have borne the burden of defeat, who have earned and kept their self-respect, who have never bowed to men or money for place or power, will wear upon their brows the laurel mingled with the oak."

For you may be sure, my young readers, that as men have gradually worked themselves up from the merest brute existence, from complete subjection, body and soul, to princes and priests, to that state of comparative freedom and independence which they now enjoy; so surely will they go on, and never rest until they have attained all that the Creator intended they should possess.

Knowledge is spreading and laws are changing so fast that the word "Utopian," which has heretofore stood for everything visionary and impractical, is becoming obsolete and meaningless; and a fairer distribu-

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*** The gentleman here referred to is Mr. John Swinton, formerly managing editor of the New York Times, who spent the savings of a life-time, thirty thousand dollars, in an attempt to establish a Socialistic journal. I gave some account of his life and conversation in the Twentieth Century of May 26—June 22, 1892.**

tion of the profits of labor, and a better condition of the working people than that even of Utopia, are only a question of time.

Let me conclude with some touching lines of the late George Perry, editor of the Home Journal, on the laboring poor of a great city:

**What's this wretched throng that passes!**
**Man in ruins can it be?**
**God in Heaven! what impious mortals**
**Here have outraged Man and Thee!**

**O ye children of the Father!**
**Whence have come your wreck and spoil?**
**Plundered, famished, blinded, buried**
**In the sepulchre of toil!**

**Oh down-trodden, chilled, embruted!**
**Where is youth's auroral flight?**
**Where affection's dewy fragrance?**
**Where the grace of manhood's might?**

**Marble homes your toil has builded—**
**Lustrous robes your toil has spun!**
**Where, poor wretches, is the fruitage**
**That from earth your toil has won?**

**Fires of Heaven! can naught more gentle**
**Than your burning, blasting tide,**
**Sweep from earth this mad oppression—**
**Crush this damning fratricide!**

**No, O Mercy, thou—thou alone,**
**From thy high celestial home—**
**Thou alone wilt bid these fallen**
**Unto life's rich banquet come!**

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### HOW GENIUS IS AWAKENED.

HOW often we find, in the history of men of genius, that they neglected the studies or the business to which they were put, and took to something more congenial to their taste! How often we find them rebelling against the injunctions and the arrangements of parents and guardians, and making arrangements of their own! Sometimes the youthful genius deserts his home and his kinsfolk, and takes to travelling or sight-seeing, acting, soldiering or hunting; sometimes he puts aside his books on law or medicine, theology or pedagogy, and takes to poetry or fiction, history or mathematics. Sir Isaac Newton's mother tried to make a farmer of him; but "the perusal of a book, the execution of a model, or the superintendence of a water-wheel of his own construction, whirling the glittering spray from some neighboring stream, absorbed all his thoughts, whilst the sheep were going astray and the cattle were devouring or treading down the corn;" which, says his biographer, soon convinced his mother that her son was not made for a farmer. Pascal's father, who was himself a mathematician, forbade his son to meddle with mathematics, and requested him to stick to languages and general literature. But the boy's bent was too strong for parental authority. "Having extracted from his father some

hints as to the subject-matter of geometry," says one of his biographers, "he went to work by himself, drawing circles and lines,—or, as he called them in his ignorance of the received nomenclature, rounds and bars,—and investigating and proving the properties of his various figures; till, without the help of a single book or of oral instruction of any kind, he had advanced as far as the thirty-second proposition of the First Book of Euclid. He had perceived that the three angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles, and was searching for a satisfactory proof when his father surprised him at his forbidden speculations." He was at this time but twelve years old; and his father, recognizing the strong bent of the boy's mind, now removed all restrictions, and allowed him to pursue a study for which he possessed such marked ability.

Rue it as he may, repent it as he often does, the man of genius is driven by an irresistible impulse to the occupation for which he was created. No matter by what difficulties surrounded, no matter how unpromising the prospect, this occupation is the only one which he will pursue with interest and pleasure. When his efforts fail to procure means of subsistence, and he finds himself poor and neglected, he may, like Burns, often look back with a sigh and think how much better off he would be, had he pursued some other occupation; but he will stick to his favorite pursuit nevertheless:

**All in this mottie, misty clime,**
**I backward mused on wasted time:**
**How I had spent my youthful prime**
**And done nae thing**
**But stringing blethers up in rhyme**
**For fools to sing.**

**Had I to good advice but harket,**
**I might, by this, hae led a market,**
**Or strutted in a bank, and clarket**
**My cash account;**
**While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarket,**
**Is a' th' amount.**

I shall here present a few examples, showing how this impulse displays itself in early life, how it strengthens with years, and how, finally overcoming all obstacles, it becomes the ruling passion of existence, the source of all the troubles and all the triumphs of its possessor.

Handel's father, who was a physician, designed his son for the profession of the law; but the boy showed a remarkable fondness for music, which was by no means encouraged by his father. Young Handel, however, contrived to get an old spinet, and, carrying it away up into a hayloft, practiced on it with great diligence, without his father's knowledge, until he had learned to play it well. Some time after this, on the occasion of his father's visit to a brother, who was in the employ of the reigning Duke of Weisenfelds, the boy was allowed to accompany him; and, while unobserved by his father, he stole away to the organ in the chapel, where, boy-like, he set up a concert on his own account. The duke, happening to hear the performance, and not recognizing the style of the performer, sent to inquire who it was. The young musician, blushing and trembling, was brought before him; but the duke, far from reproaching, praised him heartily for his performance; and, representing to his father that it was a crime to stifle his native genius, succeeded in inducing him to let the boy pursue his proper vocation.

Napoleon's favorite occupation, as a boy, was building miniature fortifications, and attacking and capturing them; and his first grand exploit as a man, that which drew the attention of France to him, was his skilful capture of the fortress of Toulon. In one of his boyish attempts at fortification storming, he got into a quarrel with another boy, who ridiculed and annoyed him in his ambitious play; and, in his rage, the young general fired one of his stone soldiers at him, striking him over the right eye and inflicting a severe wound. Twenty years afterwards, when Napoleon was at the height of power, this same person presented himself at the Tuilleries, requesting an interview with the Emperor. The latter did not remember the name of the visitor. "Tell his Majesty," said his old enemy, "that I have a big scar over my right eye, the mark of a wound received from him." "Oh," said Napoleon, recollecting him at once, "he is the fellow whom I struck with my first lieutenant of artillery! Tell him to come in." I read this story, or something like it, some thirty years ago, in Dumas' Life of Napoleon, which I have never seen since: all else in that book is faded and gone, which proves how lasting is the impression made by a story illustrative of character.

Molière was brought up to his father's calling, that of a mender of old clothes. When his grandfather brought him to see a comedy at the hotel de Bourgogne, he suddenly conceived an aversion to his father's business, and desired to be sent to college. With the help of his grandfather, and much against the will of his father, his request was granted. He spent five years at college, and then became an actor and author. Then he ennobled France and enriched the world by writing the

finest comedies in modern literature, and giving the noblest representations of them on the stage.

Schiller was early put to the study of surgery in a military school at Stuttgart, a sort of grand-ducal prison, of which the reigning duke was keeper and the students his prisoners. Here, although everything but the prescribed medical studies and military drill was forbidden, he secretly composed his first play, "The Robbers," and it was only by careful concealment and by a complete disguise that he was able to witness its performance. So galling did the uncongenial studies and tyrannical restrictions of this school become to him, that he finally fled from it, and ventured out into the world, without means and without prospect of support of any kind. Fortunately, he found friends; for a kind-hearted lady opened her house to him: and here, sitting down resolutely to his congenial work, he produced, in eight or nine months, two splendid dramas. It was thus he convinced his father and his friends that he was made to elevate the souls rather than cure the bodies of men.

The following story, which I find in Harper's Weekly, shows how the genius of one of our greatest living sculptors was first discovered:

"The sister of J. Q. A. Ward has a curious statuette in alabaster, about six inches high, under a glass case in the drawing-room of her handsome country seat near Newburg-on-the-Hudson. It is the figure of an Irishman who used to do chores for her family thirty-five years ago in Brooklyn, and is wonderfully lifelike and faithful, even to the patches in his trousers, the rent in his coat, and the creases in his narrow-brimmed stovepipe hat. The work was executed with a penknife by her brother, then in his teens, while on a visit to her

house. It so pleased her that she took it to the sculptor, H. K. Brown. 'Madam,' said he, admiring it, 'this boy has something in him.' For six years after this, young Ward was a pupil in Mr. Brown's studio, laying the foundation of the most prosperous career yet achieved by an American sculptor."

"When Opie was only ten years of age," says Mr. Ballou, in his interesting book, Genius in Sunshine and Shadow, "he saw a person who was somewhat accomplished with the pencil draw a butterfly. The boy watched the process with marked interest, and, as soon as the draughtsman had departed, produced upon a shingle a drawing equally good, which he showed to his mother. She, good woman, encouraged him, as the mother of Benjamin West had done upon a similar occasion; but his father, being a harsh, rude, low-bred man, was constantly punishing him for laziness, and for chalking faces, figures, and animals on every stray bit of board or flat surface at hand. The boy had genius, however; what he required was opportunity. Good fortune sent Dr. Walcott, better known as Peter Pindar, that way, and he, seeing the boy's dawning genius, helped him with suitable material and some useful suggestions. It was not long before the lad got away from home, quietly aided by his good friend Dr. Walcott, and soon earned money enough to clothe himself decently and make a start in life. He developed into a distinguished artist, whose historical paintings, 'The Death of Rizzio' and 'Jephtha's Vow,' became stepping-stones to his election as President of the Royal Academy."

Some men give no sign of genius until they have reached maturity; others show it almost in infancy. At the age of four years Mozart played the clavichord,

and composed a number of minuets and other pieces, which are still extant. From a high stool in the nursery, young Chalmers used to preach, with solemn mien and earnest gestures, long sermons to his infant audience; and Sir Robert Peel, when quite a little boy, used to repeat the morning's sermon, as well as he could remember it, from a high chair on which he was, after dinner, placed by his father. Goethe wrote long tragedies in his twelfth year, and Grotius published a learned philosophical work, displaying uncommon ability, in his fifteenth year. Pope, whose precocity is well known, thus informs us how he came to write poetry:

> **Why did I write? What sin to me unknown**
> **Dipt me in ink, my parents' or my own?**
> **While still a child, as yet unknown to fame,**
> **I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.**
> **I left no calling for this idle trade,**
> **No duty broke, no father disobeyed.**

And he produced in his nineteenth year one of his very best poems, the "Essay on Criticism." Cowley published a volume of poems, called "Poetic Blossoms," in his sixteenth year, and one of the pieces contained therein was written in his ninth year. The unfortunate Chatterton,

> **The marvellous boy,**
> **The sleepless soul that perished in his pride,**

wrote poems at eleven years of age that surpassed the early productions of both Pope and Cowley. How often have I, in imagination, seen Horace Walpole taking this gifted youth by the hand, and, while leading him into the path of fame, honor, and usefulness, covering himself with eternal honor! But no; the

gay, witty and worthless man of the world had no sympathy with genius in poverty.

Sir Thomas Lawrence and Benjamin West began to draw likenesses almost as soon as they could hold a pencil; Liszt played before the public at twelve years of age; and Canova, while yet a child, made models in clay and cut little marble fragments into figures of animals. Victor Hugo wrote "Bug-Jargal" at sixteen and "Hans d'Islande" at eighteen; and he completed "Notre Dame de Paris," one of his very best productions, before he was twenty-five. Verdi received his first musical impressions at a very early age from a poor wandering musician, whose "wretched violin charmed the little lad until he nearly fell into an ecstacy;" and it is supposed that this poor musician was the first to advise his father to let him study music.

Sheridan wrote one of his best comedies, "The Rivals," at twenty-four, and Byron composed his best poem, "Childe Harold," at the same age. Christopher Marlowe, who was killed in a tavern brawl at thirty, wrote half a dozen masterly dramas, filled with high ideals and magnificent conceptions, before he was twenty-eight. What sad feelings are inspired by the personal history of this boisterous yet brilliant genius, the greatest of Shakespeare's predecessors! What a different record might have been his! Had he lived worthily he might have rivalled the great master himself, and equalled him in the universality of his fame. It is a pity that Marlowe and that other powerful but unbalanced genius, Greene, his boon companion, did not come under the influence of such a man as Bacon, who could easily have convinced them both that real happiness lay only in a life of virtue. Bacon certainly

never knew any of these men, or he would have left his impress upon them.

On the other hand, we find many men of genius giving no sign of their power until pretty well advanced in life. Oliver Cromwell, who gained every battle he fought, was forty-two years old before he entered the army; Admiral Blake, famous for his victories over the Dutch and the Spaniards, was fifty years old before he ever went to sea; the Duke of Marlborough, a matchless soldier and diplomatist, whose victories at Blenheim and Ramillies were nothing to what he would have achieved had he been left free in his movements against the French, began his splendid series of victories at fifty-two; General Grant was over forty years of age when he first displayed his great ability; and General Von Moltke was sixty-six years of age before his name became generally known to the world. These are all men who exemplify the well-known saying, that circumstances make men; for it was the unusual circumstances of their time that called forth their genius. Mirabeau, the Shakespeare of eloquence, was about forty years old when he delivered his first speech; Cowper, the poet of common things, was fifty years old when he published his first volume of poems, and it was after this age that he composed nearly all his best pieces; Milton, the greatest of English epic poets, began "Paradise Lost" in his forty-eighth year and completed it in his fifty-seventh; Bunyan, the prince of allegorists, wrote his first and best work, the "Pilgrim's Progress," at forty-eight; Defoe, the father of the English novel, wrote his best fiction, "Robinson Crusoe," at fifty-eight; Cervantes, the greatest of Spanish writers, began writing in his thirty-seventh year, and produced

his masterpiece, "Don Quixote," when between fifty and sixty; and Haydn, one of the greatest of composers, produced "The Creation" at sixty-five. But perhaps the most marvellous example of late production is that of Voltaire, who produced nearly all his greatest works after his fiftieth year, and wrote his last tragedy, "Irene," in his eighty-third. Charles Reade spent all his time and energy, up to his forty-third year, in writing unsuccessful dramas, then turned his attention to prose fiction, and sprang almost at one bound into the front rank of novel-writers. These all belonged to that class of slow minds with large brain that, in the long run, go far; and they form a practical refutation of Edwin P. Whipple's assertion, that great inspirations seldom visit the mind after the thirty-fifth year! The oak takes long to mature; but when it does, it surpasses in strength and majesty every other tree of the forest. "It is not true, sir," said the sturdy Dr. Johnson, "that a man's faculties decay with years. What a man could once do he will always be able to do; unless, indeed, by dint of vicious indolence, he content himself with the exchange of fame for ease, and give no further proof of his existence than just to suck the jelly that belongs to it." *

Ben Jonson was bred to brick-laying; Molière to tailoring; Bunyan to tinkering; Akenside to meat selling;

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*I have much sympathy with the opinion of Lord Palmerston, who, on being asked what he considered the prime of life, replied, "Seventy-nine!" If a man has lived a proper life, it is only after that age that his powers begin to decay. "A remarkable thing about Samuel Morley," says a reviewer of the life of that admirable man, "was the constant openness of his mind to new impressions. Some modern physiologists maintain that

Burns to farming; Captain Cook to shopkeeping; John Hunter to carpentry; Tom Hood to wood-engraving; Charlotte Bronte to school-teaching; Michael Faraday to bookbinding; Hugh Miller to stone-cutting; Chantrey to milk selling; Charles Dickens to reporting; Bayard Taylor to type-setting; Whittier to shoe-making; and so on. But they all broke away from the shackles that bound them, turned toward those paths in which they loved to walk, and cut out a career for themselves. What was it that gave the first impulse to the revolt? What was it that started them on their new career?

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during the active first half of life the brain is engaged in extending its telegraph system, so to speak; that during this formative period it is laying down new lines for fresh currents of ideation to move upon; but that, when growth ceases and the decline of life begins, the cerebral functions are confined to the operation of the thought lines already created, and no more construction is done. Now the inevitable implication of this theory is that old men cannot take in new ideas; that their narrow conversation is, in fact, physiological and not to be escaped, and that they are incapable of advancing with their age. Samuel Morley was a standing exception to, or contradiction of, this hypothesis, for he was learning and broadening in knowledge till his latest day. This is shown by his views concerning amusements. He had been brought up in that strait sect which holds the stage to be an abomination, and regards dancing as an immoral act. There is no evidence that he ever saw a play or attended a ball in his life. It is certain that on one occasion he sternly rebuked his own pastor because the latter had permitted dancing at a children's party. But when he was an old man and deeply interested in lightening the burdens of the workingmen, he came to realize the good that was in all kinds of amusements, and he did not hesitate to subscribe freely to the building of people's halls and such places, where nightly performances of various kinds were to be given."

You will find that it was, in nine cases out of ten, some remarkable book or conversation, some startling sermon or drama, some fascinating picture or poem, some striking work of art, some triumph of genius itself. The spirit of genius entered the mind through printed page or spoken word; the sight of some masterpiece of art touched the dormant spark within, kindled it into life, and claimed it as its own. You will find that it was the Bible or the Iliad, Plutarch's Lives or Shakespeare's plays, Scott's poems or Hogarth's pictures, that first chained their attention, stirred their inner being, and caused them to entertain thoughts never entertained before. You will find that it was some human achievement, some heroic deed, or some triumph of eloquence, that first awakened them to the new life they were now to lead.

While Demosthenes was attending school, a certain case which excited considerable interest was tried at Athens; and on the day in which the leading counsel, Callistratus, was to speak, Demosthenes desired one of his friends to take him to court to hear his speech. This was done; he heard the speech; and it was so eloquent, so brilliant, and the encomiums and honors showered upon the orator were so profuse, that Demosthenes, deeply moved by the scene, resolved from that hour to become an orator.

It was the sight of the statues erected in honor of the heroes of his country that roused the ambition of Miltiades, the hero of Marathon, to do something worthy of remembrance; it was the perusal of the military history of the ancients that inspired Gustavus Adolphus with the desire to execute some grand achievement for his country; it was the reading of the chained Bible in

the monastery at Erfurt that roused Martin Luther to the vital truths of Christianity; it was the perusal of the Lives of the Saints that inspired the wounded soldier Loyola with his grand scheme for bringing the whole world within the pale of the Church; it was the sight of a beautiful enameled cup of Italian manufacture that inflamed Palissy the potter with the desire to match it, and to produce French pottery to equal it; it was the reading of Voltaire's "Letters from England" that stirred Jean Jacques Rousseau into intellectual life; it was the recital of old tales and the chanting of old ballads by his mother that first awakened in Robert Burns the desire to distinguish himself, the wish

> **That he, for poor auld Scotland's sake,**
> **Some useful plan or book could make,**
> **Or sing a song at least;**

it was the perusal of Percy's "Relics" that inspired Scott to become a poet, and the hearing of Coleridge's "Christabel" that caused him to produce "The Lay of the Last Minstrel;" it was Swift's "Tale of a Tub" that created in the farmer boy, William Cobbett, a sort of "intellectual birth," as he termed it, and caused him to begin that marvellous career of authorship which rivalled that of his master; it was the fascinating story of Joseph that suddenly aroused in the Cromarty school-boy, Hugh Miller, "creeping like snail unwillingly to school," a passionate love of reading; and it was the sight of the poor Lombard refugees, begging their bread in the streets of Genoa, that first awakened Mazzini to the miseries of his countrymen, and inspired him with the desire to become their deliverer.

"When the mind of the youthful reader," says J. Brownlee Brown, "is once roused, enchained, fired, his

redemption from sense is begun; he is delivered, though it be only in the chrysalis or caterpillar form, to the great God of truth, and he will never again be the clod he was." "To every young man of original power," says Garfield, whose speeches are remarkable for their number of striking, pregnant passages, "there comes, in early youth, a moment of sudden discovery, of self-recognition, in which his own nature is revealed to himself; in which he catches, for the first time, a strain of that immortal song of departed heroes to which his own spirit responds, and which becomes thenceforward and forever the inspiration of his life,

'Like noble music set to noble words.'"

The soul of every man, if properly treated, may be touched to fine issues. The great task is to find the master-key that will open it and awaken it into life. No better example of this can be found than Fénélon's terrible pupil, the young Duke of Burgundy. When Fénélon took him in hand he was so vicious and brutal that his common amusement was kicking and cuffing the servants who came in his way; and he was of such an unsociable and sulky disposition that he would sit for hours without speaking a word to anybody, and refuse to answer when spoken to. Nothing could excite his interest; and sometimes he would refuse to eat although the most tempting viands, prepared by the most skilful cooks, were placed before him. He had such contempt for learning, that he would not listen to teachers of any kind, and all his previous teachers had given him up in despair. Fénélon began by reading aloud to him the works of various authors, one after another, to which the prince would listen a while lan-

guidly, then turn away with contempt. Fénélon kept on, going from poet to prose-writer, dramatist to novelist, and reading with all the force and energy which he could command. At last he noticed that the prince began to listen with attention to one work which he had selected; he became interested, and asked his teacher to read on; and with each successive reading he became more and more interested, until the work was finished. This was Virgil's Æneid. Fénélon had touched the secret spring of the boy's character; he had found the key to the development of his mind: he had a Virgilian soul; the masterpiece of the great Latin poet had touched a responsive chord in his heart and awakened the nobler nature within him. The prince became an excellent pupil and an admirable man, esteeming and loving his teacher as long as he lived, and presenting an example of honorable living to all who knew him.

Sometimes the sight of a remarkable feat performed by a skilful hand does the awakening business. This was the case with two of the most remarkable surgeons of modern times. It was after witnessing an operation on a college classmate for the cure of rupture—a case in which two previous operators had failed to do the work satisfactorily—that Willard Parker was inspired with the ambition of becoming a surgeon; and so successfully did he study anatomy and surgery, that he became one of the most eminent surgeons in the United States, and the object of reverence wherever his name was mentioned.

It was the witnessing of a surgical operation performed by a skilful practitioner that first gave Ambrose Paré, who was originally a barber, the idea of becoming

a surgeon; and to such purpose did he study and practice surgery that he revolutionized the art, became the greatest surgeon of his day, and relieved poor suffering humanity from the most horrible tortures that can be conceived. In his day (1520–1590) gunshot wounds were seared with red-hot irons to stop bleeding, and then dressed with boiling oil; and when amputation was necessary, this was done with a red-hot knife! And this, you will remember, at a time when chloroform was unknown. What terrible sufferings, in one way or another, human beings have endured at the hands of the doctors! Paré, who had a heart to feel as well as a mind to conceive, abolished this terrible practice, and introduced methods that were equally successful, or far more successful, without the accompanying horrible tortures. He substituted a mild and emollient application for the boiling oil; discarded the red-hot knife and the red-hot irons; and stopped bleeding by employing the ligature, or the tying of the arteries above the wound; in short, he did such noble, godlike, beneficent service to his suffering countrymen, the French soldiers, that, with boundless love and admiration, they would enthusiastically exclaim, "Let Paré go with us, and we will march against any enemy and endure any fatigues!" And the doctors—the Latin-crammed and tradition-bound doctors—why, they reviled and reproached him because he was ignorant of Latin and dishonored science by writing in the vulgar tongue! Oh, Paré! not merely France, but Humanity stretches out her hands toward thee, across the ages, to thank thee with tears for the merciful deliverance which thou didst afford from the heartrending sufferings and quivering agonies imposed upon her by unskilful men! This, my young friends, is

the most blessed, the most sacred vocation of genius: to relieve the sufferings, to lighten the burdens, to enlighten the conscience, and to increase the comforts of mankind.

**The mission of genius on earth: to uplift,**
**Purify and redeem by its own gracious gift**
**The world, in spite of the world's dull endeavor**
**To drag down and degrade and oppose it forever.**
**The mission of genius: to watch and to wait,**
**To renew, to redeem and to regenerate.**



## CHAPTER XIX.

### HOW GENIUS IS DEVELOPED.

MANY an author becomes, after he has attained fame and an assured position in the world, ashamed of his first attempts at authorship, and endeavors to destroy, as unworthy of him, the work of his early years. Though the inferiority of a first effort may be evident, this is not a sufficient reason for its destruction. If unstained by immorality, the immaturity or juvenility of his work is by no means a subject of reproach. No man need be ashamed because the ideal of his youth does not come up to that of his manhood; no man need be ashamed because in boyhood he thought and spoke like a boy; for it is a law of nature that everything young bears the stamp of immaturity, and time brings compactness to the intellect as well as to the body. John Swinton used to say that every man has something of the calf about him until he is thirty, and Ernst Renan declares that no man can write well until he is forty.

Moreover, these first efforts, compared with those of later years, mark the progress of the mind that produced them, the advancement he has made in his art; and to destroy them is to destroy the landmarks in his history.

It was in these early efforts that the hand of the apprentice gained its skill, and without the efforts of the apprentice there would never have been those of the master. It was in remodeling old plays that Shakespeare developed his power as a dramatic poet; it was in translating foreign poems that Longfellow trained his hand to original production. Byron's "Hours of Idleness" formed so much training-work for "Childe Harold;" Carlyle's essays on German literature were preparation exercises for his "History of Frederick;" and Macaulay's essays on English statesmen were so much practice work for his "History of England." Everything must have a beginning, a middle, and an end; and the beginnings in art are seldom equal to the endings. Nearly all novel-writers, for instance, have written a score or more of unsuccessful novels before they have written a successful one; and most painters have painted a score of poor pictures before they have painted a good one. These are their practice pieces, the work of their 'prentice hand; and when they once get their hand well in, performance becomes easy, noble conceptions come naturally, and success is certain.

Balzac, whose reputation as a novelist seems to increase as time rolls on, was one of the most remarkable examples of the development of talent that the history of literature affords. At first he wrote story after story without a trace of the power he was afterward to display. Forty novels issued from his pen before he secured the attention of the public. Then he began to take immense pains with everything he wrote; writing and rewriting, correcting and recorrecting, polishing and repolishing, until he had made each work a perfect masterpiece of art. He demanded as many as a dozen

different proofs from his printer, and made so many corrections and additions that these sometimes cost more than the original composition of the work. He wandered for days among the people, inquiring into their habits, manners, motives, and ways of thinking; and travelled a hundred miles to see a house, a town, a person, or to write a few lines of description. Thus he became one of the greatest and most successful of novel-writers. Another striking example of slow development is shown in Ingres, the French painter, who told a friend that "for a great many years before he dared to sketch anything like a figure, he was compelled to design nothing but lines, circles, and mathematical outlines; and that when he began to sketch figures, he was again kept for years to the inanimate, before he was permitted to sketch from nature; and before he dared to take a palette in hand and paint in oils, no less than seven years had passed." This is the way that artists are made; this is how genius is developed. Every master in art has to go through a severe apprenticeship before he can bring all his powers into play. No man can become a master without having served an apprenticeship of some sort. "That which distracts and discourages the young student," says Mr. Holyoake, "is confounding the steps of progress with the results and displays of perfection."

It is the same story in every career. Statesmen and reformers do not spring into the position of leaders of parties and creators of new departures at one bound. They, too, go through an apprenticeship; they attain their eminence step by step, one step leading to another; often in spite of themselves, and sometimes to their own surprise. "I am sometimes astonished," said

Abraham Lincoln to Mr. Minor in the middle of the Civil War, "at the part I am enacting in this terrible drama. I can hardly believe I am the same man I was a few years ago, when I was living in my humble way with you in Springfield." Cromwell never imagined, when he began his opposition to Charles, that he would go as far as he did, and become what he did—the first ruler in England and the terror of Europe. Sir Robert Peel never imagined, when he began his defence of the Corn Laws, that he would become their practical destroyer and the champion of Free Trade. Martin Luther never imagined, when he began his attacks on the Papacy, that he would become the leader of the greatest movement of modern times. General Grant never imagined, when he was made captain of a small troop at the outbreak of the Civil War, and timidly began his pursuit of the enemy, that he would become the commander of six hundred thousand men and the greatest military chieftain of the age. These famous leaders all came to their high position step by step; they went through a painful experience, and the powers of their minds grew and expanded to meet the exigencies that confronted them. Five years before the Diet of Worms, Luther would never have dared to meet such a body; five years before the butcheries of Alva, the Prince of Orange would never have dared to think of separating his country from Spain, much less of making it a republic; five years before the last Tory administration, Mr. Gladstone would never have dared to lay before Parliament his Home Rule bill for Ireland. Thus it is with all leaders of a liberal, progressive nature; experience ripens their minds, broadens their views, and emboldens their hearts to great enterprises; the march

of events forces them into new and untried paths, and they finally arrive where they themselves never thought of arriving.

**Heaven is not reached at a single bound,**
**But we build the ladder by which we rise**
**From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,**
**And we mount to its summit round by round.**

How is it that Mr. Gladstone is able, at eighty-four years of age, to bear the immense weight of business and responsibility which the leadership of the Liberal party, a national election campaign, and the premiership of England entail, without breaking down? I will tell you: He has made himself equal to it; he has been under fire for forty years; he has grown to his work. He is no longer annoyed and rendered sleepless by the defection or the adverse criticism of friends and the savage attacks of enemies. He has made up his mind that he is right, and will go right on without minding them. He can rest at any moment; he can shake off the cares of state, and go to sleep whenever he gets a chance. Without that, he would break down in a month. He says to himself, "The ship is in her right course; everything is in order; every officer in his place; now let her drive!" and goes to sleep.

As the man grows, so does his work. It is seldom that a poet or a painter, even a man of genius, plans a great work, sits down to the execution of it, and keeps on working, day after day, until he has finished it. Nearly every great literary work, like every other great enterprise, takes at first, in the mind of its author, a somewhat indefinite shape; it grows gradually into form; and sometimes it is not until its author has got to work on it that it assumes in his mind symmetry and com-

pleteness. Voltaire could not go on with any work he had once begun until he had seen the first part in print, and then he came to see whether it was good or bad, and what character the whole work was to assume. Gibbon wrote the first chapter of his famous history seventeen times before he could go on with it. He was thus pluming his wings for the great flight. Walter Scott wrote the first part of his first romance, "Waverley," years before he wrote the second part. He had thrown it aside, and it had long lain in an old lumber-room, when, one day, while hunting for fishing-tackle, he came across it. He re-read it; thought better of it; and determined to finish it. His mind had, in the meantime, undergone considerable development; he had had many other conceptions; he had produced a number of other works, and had thus become ripe for the production of the romance.

It is stated of Dante that he wrote the first seven cantos of his great poem, the "Inferno," years before he attempted the succeeding ones; that these first cantos, being found at Florence after the poet's banishment, were taken to a friend, who, being greatly delighted with them, showed them to a certain noble lady, at whose entreaty the poet resumed his task and completed it. The authenticity of this story is doubted; but it is quite probable, for there are many stories to match it. We know that Milton, for instance, had the plan of his great poem, "Paradise Lost," in his mind long before he attempted to compose it; and we know that he first planned it as a mystery, then as a drama, and finally as an epic poem. We know that Goethe, who chiselled away at "Faust" at different intervals during forty years, finally gave an altogether different shape to

that poem from what he originally intended. In fact, there are many poets and prose-writers who have placed long intervals between the beginning and the ending of their work, which has often turned out quite different from what they themselves had anticipated.

George Eliot's experience resembles that of the great Sir Walter so much, and is so interesting, that I am tempted to give it entire, as related by herself in Mr. Cross's excellent biography of her:

"September, 1856, made a new era in my life, for it was then I began to write fiction. It had always been a vague dream of mine that some time or other I might write a novel; and my shadowy conception of what the novel was to be, varied, of course, from one epoch of my life to another. But I never went further toward the actual writing of the novel than an introductory chapter describing a Staffordshire village and the life of the neighboring farm-houses; and as the years passed on I lost hope that I should ever be able to write a novel, just as I desponded about everything else in my future life. I always thought I was deficient in dramatic power, both of construction and dialogue, but I felt I should be at my ease in the descriptive part of a novel. My 'introductory chapter' was pure description, though there were good materials in it for dramatic presentation. It happened to be among the papers I had with me in Germany, and one evening at Berlin something led me to read it to George. He was struck with it as a bit of concrete description, and it suggested to him the possibility of my being able to write a novel, though he distrusted—indeed, disbelieved in—my possession of any dramatic power. Still, he began to think that I might as well try some time what I could do in fiction,

and by and by, when we came back to England, and I had greater success than he ever expected in other kinds of writing, his impression that it was worth while to see how far my mental power would go, toward the production of a novel, was strengthened. He began to say very positively, 'You must try and write a story,' and when we were at Tenby he urged me to begin at once. I deferred it, however, after my usual fashion with work that does not present itself as an absolute duty. But, one morning, as I was thinking what should be the subject of my first story, my thoughts merged themselves into a dreamy doze, and I imagined myself writing a story, of which the title was 'The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton.' I was soon wide awake again and told George. He said, 'Oh, what a capital title!' and from that time I had settled in my mind that this should be my first story. George used to say, 'It may be a failure—it may be that you are unable to write fiction. Or, perhaps it may be just good enough to warrant your trying again.' Again, 'You may write a *chef d'œuvre* at once—there's no telling.' But his prevalent impression was, that though I could hardly write a *poor* novel, my effort would want the highest quality of fiction—dramatic presentation. He used to say, 'You have wit, description and philosophy —those go a good way toward the production of a novel. It is worth while for you to try the experiment.' We determined that if my story turned out good enough we would send it to Blackwood; but George thought the more probable result was that I should have to lay it aside and try again."

The result was the now famous "Scenes from Clerical Life," which first appeared in Blackwood's Magazine, and

which achieved almost as great a success as Walter Scott's "Waverley" achieved when it first appeared.

The experience of another successful lady novelist, still living, is sufficiently interesting to be given in her own words. Says Miss Rhoda Broughton:

"I never wrote a line till I was twenty-two; and then I read Miss Thackeray's 'Story of Elizabeth.' Hearing it was written by a girl not much older than I was, I asked myself why I should not write as well. And so one wet Sunday afternoon, having grown very tired of my Sunday book, 'Elijah the Tishbite,' I took an old French copy-book, and began to scribble. Never shall I forget the rapture of that first fit of composition; and though the story, when finished, was so severely criticised by an old friend that I never ventured to offer it to any publisher, yet I was so far from being discouraged that in the autumn of the same year (1863) I wrote another, 'Not Wisely, but too Well.' I finished it in six weeks, in a state of high excitement all the time. It lay by me for two years, until January, 1865, when, being on a visit at Dublin to my uncle by marriage, Joseph le Fanu, the novelist, I read two specimen chapters aloud to him and to Percy Fitzgerald. The former took me by the hand, saying, 'You will succeed, and when you do, remember that I prophesied it.' He at once accepted the story for The Dublin University Magazine, which he then edited, and also persuaded Richard Bentley to promise to bring it out in three-volume form."

Between the first and the second efforts of these writers, their minds grew, their knowledge increased, their genius unfolded, their horizon was enlarged, their self-confidence was strengthened, their power of expres-

sion was augmented, and they went on from good to better. and from better to best. After their first conception of a work, they formed a plan; brooded over it; made an effort to execute it; let it rest; gathered new strength; went at it again; then, as their power and confidence increased, carried it successfully forward to completion. Such are the steps by which genius attains its triumphs.

No man knows what he can do until he tries; no man knows the power that is in him until he is put to his mettle. There is nothing like making an attempt. Never mind how poor the first attempt may be; to be able to see that the first attempt is poor is a proof of ability to do better. When a conception is formed, an attempt to carry it out should at once be made; for the conception becomes clearer with the attempt to realize it. When the mind is glowing with ideas, that is the time to work; that is the time for the artist to seize his brush, pen or pencil, and give his "airy nothings" a "local habitation and a name." He must not let them pass as a mere reverie, or say he will put them down some other time; he must strike while the iron is hot, or they will be forever lost. Once you have got a-going at your task, you will find the daily occurrences of life constantly supplying new material for it; you will find a great number of things constantly springing up around you that fit exactly into it. The author of "Mr. Isaacs" was one day telling this story to a friend, when, on concluding, his friend said, "Go and write that story out at once; it is capital." He did so; and we have now another great novelist, who writes at least one story every year.

It is in this power of *doing* that all the difference

between men of genius and other men lies; for all men have beautiful conceptions and interesting thoughts (otherwise how could they appreciate such things when they read them?) but few have the energy, courage and perseverance to put them into shape. "The longer I live," says Goethe, "the more certain I am that the great difference between men, the great and the insignificant, is *energy*, invincible *determination*, an honest purpose once fixed, and the victory. That quality will do anything that can be done in the world; and no talent, no circumstances, no opportunity will make a two-legged creature a man without it."

It was one of the sage observations of Addison that if the thoughts of the wise and those of the foolish were made public, no great difference would be found between them; the chief merit of the former lying therein, that, when publicity is required, they have the discretion to suppress the foolish thoughts. Adam Smith maintains that, at birth, all men are about equally endowed, and that the great difference in after years is due to the difference of development in their various habits and employments. He takes, as an illustration, a philosopher and a common street porter, and thus compares their careers: "When they came into the world, and for the first seven or eight years of their lives, they were, perhaps, very much alike, and neither parents nor playfellows could perceive any remarkable difference between them. About that age, or soon after, they come to be employed in very different occupations. The difference of talents then comes to be taken notice of and widens by degrees, till at last the vanity of the philosopher is unwilling to acknowledge any resemblance at all." So that these great

authorities fortify me in the assertion, which I have elsewhere made, that the difference between men is owing mainly to the training they receive, and the associations they are accustomed to; that all men possess *some* genius; that every man has *some* divine thoughts, *some* glimpses of noble things, *some* impulses to do noble things, and that no man is exclusively animal. Every man whose mind is filled with admiration at the sight of beauty and innocence; whose heart throbs with indignation at the exhibition of cruelty and injustice; whose feelings are moved to tears by a pathetic tale or an heroic history; whose soul is touched with sympathy at the recital of noble deeds or the triumphs of virtue, is possessed with genius, and has "all the marks upon him." He is endowed with the prime elements, and all that is needed to make these generative and fruitful is energetic effort and all-conquering labor.

## CHAPTER XX.

### LEARNING TO WRITE ENGLISH.*

HOW is it that so many of those who have received a common-school education are unable to express their thoughts easily in writing? Why is it that so many of those who can talk easily and correctly cannot write in the same manner? This is the question which I propose to answer, and for which deficiency I shall endeavor to point out the remedy.

People talk easily because they are accustomed to it; and the same principle holds good in writing. We learn only by doing, not by being shown how a thing is done. I may look for years at a painter or sculptor at work, and never learn how to paint a picture or carve out a statue. Now in the common schools there is very little writing of thoughts, very few attempts at composition of any kind. There is much spelling of words and learning of rules; there is a great deal of parsing, analyzing, defining, and learning by heart.

* It will probably serve toward a better understanding of this chapter and the two following, when the reader is informed that they were written for Far and Near, a paper devoted to the interests of working girls. An article of a similar nature was also written by the author for the North American Review.

But there is little writing of thoughts, connected thoughts, which form a composition, and this practice is the only thing that gives one the power of expression. Storing the memory with words, facts, and rules affords no development of this power; learning how to spell and define words does not teach scholars how to compose. Except a formal composition about once a month in the higher classes, the scholars never write anything of their own; but they spell and define words every day. Now this spelling of words, which is absolutely useless as a mental discipline, must and ought to give place to another practice; namely, that of *writing to dictation passages from good authors every day.* This, together with original composition, leads one to learn practically how to express thought. There is no thought in word-spelling, and the most meaningless book in existence (of which most copies are sold) is the spelling book. Spelling brings no faculty into play but memory, which is the poorest of all the faculties; while in writing dictations nearly all the faculties, together with the senses, are brought into play: hand, eye, ear, reason, observation, thought, memory, imagination, judgment, all these are exercised in the scholar while he is slowly writing down the thoughts of others in a connected composition or essay. There is no exercise in language-learning that is more many-sidedly useful than the dictation, and none that can be more easily performed. Let me show how it is done, and how it works on the mind of the scholar.

The teacher (or any good reader, for it may be easily practiced at home) reads slowly to the writer sentence after sentence, or only part of a sentence at a time, according to length, taking care to carry along the

sense as he reads, so that the writer perceives the meaning of what he is writing, and thinks of it or lets it sink into his mind as he goes along. When done, let the writer take the book and compare and correct every word and point himself. Thus the scholar learns by this practice: First, the logical connection of the sentences; hence logical thinking and unity of subject. Second, the force and meaning of words in actual use; the idiomatic use of words; and the varying meaning of words under different circumstances. Take, for instance, the word *nervous*, which is used with directly opposite meanings; as, he is a nervous (weak) man; he has a nervous (strong) arm. Third, he learns the different spelling of similar-sounding words; as, their, there, they're; pare, pear, pair. Fourth, he learns how to punctuate; an important matter, which can never be learned by rules (for in English this is often a matter of taste), and which word-spellers never learn. Fifth, he learns how to associate words with ideas, which is the way in which he learned to speak, and which is the only way in which words should be learned. Sixth, he learns to compose in the best of all ways, by *doing*, by actually putting down thought after thought in logical order; he acquires the power of expression by expressing thought on paper; and, above all, he acquires a *taste* and *feeling* for correct language, without which no good writing is at all possible.

The study of grammars does not enable one to write well; grammarians themselves are not good writers. It is the study of authors, the practice of expressing thought, that confers this power. After much writing of the thoughts of others, one instinctively passes to the expression of one's own—it comes natural to one.

Franklin used to study one of Addison's essays carefully, then close the book and endeavor to write out the thoughts in his own words. This he did until he came to write as well as Addison himself. Cobbett, whose little English Grammar* is the best in the world for private study, studied Swift in the same way (he learned the "Tale of a Tub" almost by heart), and he acquired a style famous for its clearness, ease and force. This writing and engraving of thought is that *careful reading* which gives training; for, as Ruskin says, a man may read all the books in the British Museum and yet remain an uneducated, illiterate person. A few good books well studied is what gives one a true knowledge of language and the power of expression.

Another good plan is to write down, as well as you can, the substance of any book or essay you have read. This becomes your own, and gradually leads you to easy and fluent expression of original thought. Grammar and rhetoric are best studied after one has read and written a good deal; before that, they are of little use. And both grammar and rhetoric are best taught by one who can, from the mistakes made in the work actually done by the learner, illustrate or bring forth grammatical rules and rhetorical principles; for these will now be understood and observed for their practical value, while rules taught abstractly are little understood and easily forgotten.

To read well, one must read as he talks. So with writing. To write well, one must write as he talks. His language must be easy, natural, unaffected. The error of most people is in thinking that when they take

*Published by the Worthington Co., price one dollar.

a pen in hand they must use different words and expressions from those they use in conversation. That is a great error. You must never use a word or phrase which you would hesitate to use in conversation. The simpler the words and the plainer the style the better. That is one reason why "Robinson Crusoe" and "The Pilgrim's Progress" are so popular; there is scarcely a word in either which a child may not understand. That is perfection of style. Look at that masterpiece of oratory, Antony's address in Julius Cæsar: four-fifths of the words are words of one syllable. Somebody has well said, "As soon as you write a sentence which you think very fine, strike it out;" for ten to one it is nonsense.

And then, when you have anything to say, do not put off the writing of it till to-morrow; dash it off at once, while it is fresh in your mind, in the words that first come to you; otherwise it will be poorly done, stiff or affected. What is written easily enters the mind of others easily, while labored productions need something of labor to understand them. Grammatical rules you must know; but, as Mr. R. G. White says, if you think of these rules while writing, you will never write a sentence worth reading. If you study good writers and speakers, you are safer, in writing, in following your taste and feeling than in following grammatical rules. For instance, many persons are at a loss about the proper use of the adverbs. The grammar says that an adverb must follow a verb; and yet we hear people say and see authors write, "it sounds harsh; it tastes sweet; it feels smooth; it looks handsome;" which are all correct. Precisians in grammar say, "he feels badly; he arrived safely; he looked nicely;" which are all false; for where *condition* or *quality* (and not *manner*) is indicated, the adjective and not the adverb must be used.

That is a principle which the common people, who know nothing of grammar, instinctively follow. Again: the grammar says we must use *an* and not *a* before words beginning with a vowel; and yet we hear people say every day, "a European, a union, a useful book, such a one;" and they are right. For these words begin with the *sound* of a consonant, a "Yuropean, a yunion, such a wone;" *y* and *w* being consonants at the beginning of a word or syllable. Precisians follow the letter and violate the spirit of the rule, and say, "an one, an university;" the common people, never. Follow, therefore, your *feeling* more than *rules*.

The practice of writing passages from literature to dictation is the same as that of setting type: it is *composing*, or setting up, thoughts to be read by the public; and this practice, or the training from this practice, has given us half the editors of the United States, men who have graduated from the *composing-room* of a newspaper office, rather than the rhetoric-class of a college. Not only Franklin, Greeley, Bayard Taylor, Thurlow Weed, Garrison, and a host of other writers and statesmen, but most of the editors throughout the country, received their training at the "case." They became familiar with every-day English, with the language of the people as an exponent of thought; and consequently they soon found it easy to express their own thoughts, in the same way, by this practically-learned medium of expression.

Let any young man or woman, therefore, who wishes to compose easily and well, write to dictation every day half a page from some good author (or copy a page), and I will guarantee him or her the power of easy and fluent composition in the course of a twelve-month.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THINGS THAT HAVE HELPED ME.

WHEN I look back on my life, I recall three or four courses which served me well in the way of culture. The first was when, in early manhood, my brother and I, after our hard day's work, used to sit down after supper and read aloud to each other. In this way we read a considerable number of the best English books and not a few French ones, besides a good deal of the periodical literature of the day. It is surprising how much one may do if he only makes a regular thing of it. Things done by fits and starts never amount to much. I remember we went through "Macaulay's Essays," "Hume's History of England," "Chesterfield's Letters," most of Shakespeare's and Molière's plays, together with "Gil Blas," "Don Quixote," the "Leather-stocking Tales," and some of our best English biographies and novels. Here I laid the foundation of my literary knowledge, and I consider this course of reading one of the best things I ever undertook. I assure you, there is great virtue in this practice of reading aloud. Those thoughts which enter the mind through the ear seem to sink more deeply

than those which enter through the eye; the tone of the voice helps comprehension and appreciation; and there is a chance for observation and criticism which is lacking in silent reading. We had many a talk, my brother and I, on what we read in those days; and all this helped on our education.

The next course was when I joined a debating society, which was composed of young men who, like myself, had to work for a living, and were eager to cultivate their minds by any means in their power. Here I had a chance to air my knowledge, to compare my powers with those of other young men, and to learn something of the practice of verbal expression. This was quite an important step in my education; for the discussions among those young men incited me to make further efforts for knowledge, and gave me a taste for historical studies.

The next was when, accepting the position of teacher in a boarding-school in France, I began to teach German as well as English, although I had but small acquaintance with the former language. Now I went to work, might and main, to master this language; and I did so, so effectually, and taught it so successfully, that on announcing my intention, at the end of a year, to set out for Germany, my principal offered me large inducements to remain; and the Germans, when I arrived in their country, would scarcely believe, from the easy manner in which I spoke their language, that neither of my parents was German, nor had ever learned to speak a word of German. The drill in grammar which I underwent in this study has been of great value to me.

The next step was when, on returning to the United States, I joined a Shakespearian Reading Circle, which

was composed of ladies and gentlemen, and in which each reader had a whole character to read throughout each play. The characters were assigned by lot, if I may use such an expression; and after the lots were drawn, we sometimes changed characters with one another by mutual consent. Now these readings caused me to study carefully not only the character I had to read, but all the characters of the play; and this had several important results. I acquired some real knowledge of the great poet; I learned what measure, and figures, and diction, and the best qualities of a good style are; I gained some knowledge of elocution, advanced my acquaintance with my mother tongue, and acquired a taste for good literature and good English. Then the conversations at these readings were not a little interesting to me; for we criticised certain characters and passages at the end of each act, and this gave occasion for the expression of views and opinions which, but for these readings, would probably never have been expressed. These talks were—precisely because we had something else to meet for than talk—easy, spontaneous, and agreeable. Conversation is seldom very edifying where people meet expressly to talk; for it is not always when people try to talk well that they talk best.

I may mention that it was here, among these young ladies, to whose Juliet or Portia or Rosalind I read Romeo or Bassanio or Orlando, that I found one equal to any of the originals in all fine qualities, and finished one of our fictitious (can they be so called?) love-matches by making it a real one. This was, as you may imagine, the most important step in self-culture I had yet taken; but, although I have no hesitation in saying to every young

man, "Go, and do likewise," I do not reckon this, just now, among the steps I wish to speak of.

The next step was when, on entering a German-American Academy as a teacher of languages, I made the acquaintance of one of the best teachers and most amiable men I ever knew, Mr. Magnus Schoeder, with whom I began a series of exchange lessons, in which he taught me mathematics and I taught him English. From him I learned, with the most pleasing surprise, that the whole science of mathematics, which I had hitherto considered the most difficult of all studies, is nothing but a series of self-evident truths, which he unfolded to me so clearly that I could, before I got through, solve almost any problem he gave me. He showed me, too, that arithmetic, far from being a subject to be taught merely as a preparation for business life, must be taught as a mental discipline, as a drill in the art of correct thinking, which makes all other advantages follow of themselves. It was, in short, from him that I received my first real instruction in the great art of teaching.

The next step was when, on becoming principal of a public school, I organized a reading circle among my teachers; not this time in Shakespeare alone, but in general literature, and especially in pedagogic literature, that we might learn all that previous thinkers and teachers had thought and written on education, or the art of training young minds; and as we met regularly once a fortnight for years, we went through a great many books on this subject, notably Parker's Talks on Teaching, Fitch's Lectures on Education, Paine's Lectures on the same subject, Quick's Educational Reformers, and Meyer's Ancient Nations. In this way I

acquired, or rather we all acquired, a considerable knowledge of the best thoughts and most approved methods of all previous teachers, and learned more of the human intellect and its operations than we could have learned in any other way while earning our bread by actual toil. We read paragraph after paragraph, each reading a separate paragraph, and stopping at the end of each paragraph or chapter as we went along, to offer any comments or suggestions that occurred to us. Here I found occasion to bring out what I had learned in previous studies and situations, which encouraged the others to do the same. At first, the young ladies, of whom there were thirty-three, were very shy of offering remarks; but, little by little, they gained confidence, and soon they could talk easily and without embarrassment.

Let me, in conclusion, say a word about reading Shakespeare in companies or circles. I consider the reading of Shakespeare in this way of great value; quite as much so for women as for men. My only regret is, that in our circle we knew nothing of such a work as Hudson's School and Family Shakespeare (the first volume of which, sold separately, contains eight complete plays, among the best, with only a word or two here and there omitted); for we had to omit whole scenes and passages, the very omission of which made, I think, a disagreeable impression, and marred to a certain extent our enjoyment. I used this very book of Hudson's with signal success in the highest class of the German Academy, instead of the ordinary reading-book; so that this lesson, with the debate which I organized among the scholars, was always looked forward to with eager anticipations of pleasure.

My experience is, that the older a man grows, and the larger his acquaintance with mankind, the more respect he has for women; not merely for their moral character, but for their mental capacity. Shakespeare seems to have learned this at a very early stage in his career; for, as Ruskin points out, he has in reality no heroes, but only heroines. In nearly every play it is his women who show the men what stupid fellows they are, and lead them out of the troubles in which they entangle themselves. When women can talk about character, their remarks are generally pertinent and valuable; for they see traits which elude the male vision, and evince an insight into the aims and motives of men which is truly wonderful. Cobbett tells us that in escaping from France at the outset of the French Revolution, he could easily delude the men; but not so the women, one of whom saw completely through him, notwithstanding his glib tongue, and but for an early flight would surely have had him caged. We men can perhaps reason more logically than they; but our reasoning often goes to show that white is black (witness the efforts of Ignatius Donnelly and the Bacon-Shakespearians), whereas women never pervert things in this way, but get at the truth by some sort of intuitive or occult power. When I have any very difficult case to decide, I always go to a woman (you may imagine whom) to find out what I should do; and I have never known her to advise me wrong. And then she is infallible in deciding as to the character of individuals. I simply say, "What do you think of this man? is he to be trusted?" and if she says, "I don't like him," that settles it: I know she is right; for I have found this out to my cost. I do not know how she does this, how

she sees into the souls of people; nor does she perhaps know herself; but she does it, and that is enough for me. Perhaps her study of Shakespeare may have had something to do with it; for there is no other author who, in his works, affords a better opportunity or a fairer field for learning something of human nature and human character than Shakespeare.

**They talk about a woman's sphere**
**As though it had a limit;**
**There's not a place in earth or heaven,**
**There's not a task to mankind given,**
**There's not a blessing or a woe,**
**There's not a whisper, Yes or No,**
**There's not a life, or death, or birth,**
**That has a feather's weight of worth,**
**Without a woman in it.**



## CHAPTER XXII.

### TEACHING AS A PROFESSION FOR WOMEN.

THE first thing to be done by one who wishes to become a public-school teacher is to obtain a certificate, or license to teach; for no person can draw a salary as a teacher in a public school unless he or she has obtained a certificate, which guarantees that the applicant has acquired the knowledge necessary to be able to teach. This knowledge may be acquired in any school, or in no school. All that is required of the applicant is that he or she be of good moral character and at least eighteen years of age. Most of our public-school teachers graduate from the public school, which shows that the knowledge obtained there is sufficient. When I say the public school, I include of course the high-school and the normal school; though many teachers never enter either. But the greatest school of all is the school of self-effort, in which most of those who excel receive their training, and in which one may receive an education that will fit him for any position whatever.

Now if you make up your mind to try for a certificate, and wish to know in what branches you will be examined, and the nature of the questions that will be put to you, all you have to do is to address a note to the city or county superintendent, asking him to be so kind as to send you a copy of the last set of examination questions, which are all printed on one sheet, and which he will readily send you. Then you must get the necessary books, and prime yourself for this examination. The best of us must do that; for a great deal is asked that is seldom or never used. If you once pass the examination for the lowest grade, which is not difficult, you will find the next easier; for you gradually get into the way of solving questions and problems as well as of asking and forming them. The Germans say that he who learns A is sure to learn B; and so he who takes the first step is sure to take the second, and with pluck and perseverance, the third also. The teacher who has a first-grade certificate is generally regarded as a superior person, and likely to receive a superior salary.

As to a position in a private school, that is another matter. Here any certificate may be useful, though none is absolutely necessary. You are judged here more by your general appearance and apparent fitness to teach than by anything else. A position in a private school is often superior to one in a public school; for in private schools the salaries are generally higher and the classes smaller; fine qualities of conduct, manner, speech, and carriage are more highly esteemed; and there are no ever-recurring examinations to be gone through. Sometimes the principal of a private school puts the applicant through a course of trial lessons be-

fore a class in his presence, and decides as to his fitness by the manner in which he conducts himself in these. I once heard of a principal who, laying down his silk hat as he entered the class-room, said to the candidate for a position in his school, "Could you teach geography from that hat?" Of course, one who knows how to teach could do this; for he would instantly perceive that attention could be drawn to the material of which the hat is composed, to the manner in which silk is produced, to the worms that produce it, the trees on whose leaves they live, the country in which these trees grow, etc.; and thus would originate a fine lesson on Italy and the Italians. But the candidate in this instance was a novice, who had no idea of such a thing; he thought he must have at least a geography, or a globe; and so he failed to secure the position he sought.

When you have passed your examination and secured a certificate, you should address a note of application to each board of education within hailing distance of your residence. In this note you should state where you were educated (if in the school of self-effort, all the better), the date of your certificate, the amount of your experience, if you have any, and any other important fact illustrating your capacity and fitness to teach. This note of application is filed; the name of the applicant is registered; and, when a vacancy occurs the applicant stands a fair chance of being appointed. That is how things are done with us. Of course, personal application and solicitation go a great way; but an honest board will give the preference to the most capable candidate.

I should not, however, confine myself to public

schools: I should apply to private schools as well, for the reasons I have already stated. One of my teachers, who had only $375 a year, applied for an increase of salary: being refused, she made application to a private school in New York (where she was tested in the manner above described), and immediately received an appointment with $600 a year. When I returned from Germany, I procured the names and addresses of the chief private schools in New York city; and, setting out at eight o'clock in the morning, I visited the principal or proprietor of a dozen schools, and secured two situations in three days, one in a day-school and the other in a night-school. As to the salaries in the public school, they vary according to the locality; the cities pay more than the towns, the towns more than the villages. They range all the way from $200 to $2,000 a year for women, and about twice as much for men. But the men are nearly all principals, the women nearly all class-teachers.

Now as to who should become teachers—I mean who, among all those looking for a profession, or who, among all those engaged in other and less satisfactory pursuits, should endeavor to enter this profession—I think that every young woman who has a love for study, for intellectual pursuits, who is fond of reading and enlarging her stock of knowledge, should become a teacher; for the very fact that she is animated by a passion for study and a thirst for knowledge indicates that the Creator meant she should live by spreading knowledge among others, and letting her light shine so as to "give light unto all that are in the house." I do not insist upon her having a fondness for children; if she have no aversion to them, that is sufficient. The

love of knowledge, of intellectual progress, will bring the rest in due time. We are so constituted that we find our greatest happiness in doing what we like to do, in work in which we feel that we are ourselves going upward and onward, and carrying others along with us; and I think that no work is so congenial, so satisfying to a studious mind, as the teaching and training of young people, the forming of the minds and hearts of the rising generation. These young people will retain forever the remembrance of their teachers, and extend their influence to all coming generations.

The teacher has far more influence than the preacher; for the teacher has his audience before him five days in the week, and all day long; while the preacher has his audience before him but one day in the week, and only for an hour or so altogether; and while the minds of the teacher's hearers are as wax to receive impressions, those of the preacher are as steel, being already formed and fixed, and by no means easily impressed. Hume says that he who attains mediocrity in literature stands far above him who attains eminence in trade; and I think that he or she who attains eminence as a teacher is in no way inferior to a first-class preacher, or physician, or lawyer, or editor.

Teaching means quite a different thing now from what it used to mean. It now means all that is lovely instead of all that is hateful; it now means inspiring children with a love of knowledge, and seeing them eagerly pursuing it of their own accord, instead of forcing and flogging it into them; it now means a loving and cordial understanding between pupil and pedagogue, instead of a distant and overbearing attitude on the part of the one and a shrinking, dreading, deceiving attitude on the

part of the other; it now means awakening the minds of youth to all that is interesting and beautiful in the world, instead of cramming them with all that is hateful and repulsive; it now means running like deer to a place of happiness, instead of "creeping like snail unwillingly to school." As it is now seen, teaching is not merely an art, but a science; not merely an occupation, but a profession. There is now, for the first time in the world's history, a chair of pedagogy in one of our universities, which is founded on the principle that teaching is as much a science as theology, medicine, or jurisprudence, and which grants degrees to those who attain a certain proficiency in this science. How different things are now from those "good old times" when men thought that one who had failed at every other calling might become a schoolmaster!

Yet it must not be supposed that everyone who has acquired a certain amount of knowledge may become a teacher. A teacher he may become, but not one who educates. Precisely as it is not always those who pass through the regular curriculum who make the best doctors, lawyers, or preachers, so it is not always those who have had the longest schooling or acquired the most knowledge that make the best teachers. Successful teaching is largely a matter of gift and inclination, of loving and liking for the work, of openness of mind, and of eagerness for advancement in knowledge and skill. One with a gift and little knowledge is infinitely preferable to one with no gift and much knowledge; for the want of knowledge may be remedied, but never the want of a gift. I have known teachers who were poor at examinations, but excellent at teaching. Yet I believe that any person with a good natural capacity, with

a willing and kindly disposition, and a love of study, may become a good teacher. It is only those who hate the profession, who do not care for intellectual progress, that make bad teachers. Seneca, in the following words, displays the very soul and spirit of a true teacher: "If I delight to learn, it is that I may teach; nor will aught, however salutary, however excellent, bring me pleasure, if I am to learn it for myself alone. Were wisdom to be offered me on the sole condition that I should keep it locked up and not proclaim it, I would shun wisdom. Without another to share, there is no joy in possessing."

Now let us consider for a moment the advantages and disadvantages of the teacher's profession. In the first place, it is a fine thing for a lady to have such working-hours as those of school-children, and such holidays, too; it is a fine thing for a lady to be able to get to work at nine o'clock in the morning and to get home after three in the afternoon; it is a fine thing to have every Saturday and Sunday free, a holiday or two almost every month, and a vacation of two or three months every year besides. The great thing that I saw in this profession, when I first adopted it, was the increased amount of time it afforded me for study. That, I thought, made me equal to a man of independent fortune. I had envied all those who had been able to devote their entire youth to study; but now I thought I could make up for it. Garfield used to say that all thinking workmen make every stroke of the hammer, every blow of the axe, a step toward leisure to study. No occupation or calling allows the workman to make so many such steps as that of the teacher.

In the next place, teaching children seems a peculiarly fitting employment for women, something suited to

their nature and capacity. Far from being degrading, as many occupations of women are, this is and ought to be in the highest degree ennobling and elevating. The teacher who loves her work and knows how to make it interesting need never fear any difficulty with her scholars; they will be only too ready to meet her with attention and repay her with love and gratitude. It is the old, stupid practice of cramming them with things they don't comprehend that makes them and the work hateful. I used to think, as the Germans still think, that women have not the capacity of men in teaching. I think now that they have, in some respects, a finer capacity than men: they are more patient, persevering, kind, and even-tempered; they have a gentler and more winning way, and consequently a more civilizing, humanizing influence on their scholars. While men compel attention and obedience, women win it by persuasion and gentleness. Indeed women possess a tact and skill in discipline which few men can equal. The truth is, however, that the influence of both male and female teachers is necessary to make perfect men and women: this is as nature has ordained; for children at school, like those at home, need the influence of both father and mother to mould their hearts and minds aright. And this is why it is well to put boys and girls together in the same class: they exert a beneficial influence on each other. "We cannot improve on the plan of the Almighty," said a New England teacher, "who decreed that boys and girls should be brought up in the same family." There is no influence better than that of sister on brother, brother on sister and father and mother on both.

Among the disadvantages may be reckoned, the severe

strain on the system which conscientious class-teaching entails; the ill effects of close confinement in crowded school-rooms; the vexations consequent upon the unruly conduct of ill-mannered or ill-bred children; the worry caused by ever-recurring county examinations; and the anxiety caused by the necessity of bringing the class up to the required standard. Well, these are disadvantages; but what position in life is without its disadvantages? And what pleasure would there be in life if there were no difficulties or disadvantages to be overcome? If the principal of the school be a gentleman, and the board of trustees honest men, then much of the worry and anxiety are eliminated.

There is another disadvantage—perhaps an imaginary one—which I would like to mention. I do not know what the figures are, what proportion of ladies engaged in teaching get married as compared with those engaged in other pursuits; but it is said that fewer teachers than other women-workers enter the state of matrimony. I doubt the fact; but if it is so, it is probably owing, first, to the circumstance that most of our lady teachers earn as much to-day as the young men of their rank do; some of them much more; and they do not care to exchange a comfortable single existence for an uncomfortable double one. Secondly, to the fact that many of our young men are getting more and more like those of Europe in one respect: they look for a wife with a dowry, and prefer a vulgar woman with money to a cultured woman without. The ordinary young man, clerk, salesman, or mechanic, lives on a lower plane than the teacher, and prefers a girl he can fool with or make a fool of to a woman of character. As he is not up to her, he does not feel at ease in her presence; and

would rather mate with the vulgar daughter of a shoddy contractor than with the most accomplished teacher. A gentleman feels that it is for him to earn the bread, and for his wife to take care of his home and children; but the fortune-hunter wants a wife who can do both. He is always a sensual, selfish brute; and it does not take long for his victim to find this out. One thing I know, which is, that a good education, with practical experience in the training and managing of children, far from unfitting, renders a woman all the more fit for being a good wife and mother; and he who gains the love of such a woman, even if she have not a penny, acquires a fortune more precious than that of the Astors.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### IS GENIUS HEREDITARY?

I HAVE sometimes thought that when God made man and breathed the breath of life into him, he gave him some of his own immortal Spirit, some of that Spirit which is ceaselessly active in forming new creations; and having thus endowed him with creative power, he gave him the faculty of speech to perpetuate his creations. Thus distinguished from the rest of the animal creation, which has life but not spirit, instinct but not reason, growth but no development, man needs only ceaseless effort to make himself truly the image of his Creator. All noble things are within his grasp, and perfect happiness within his attainment.

But man has another spirit, which, for consistency's sake, we must assume to be given him by the same Creator: he has a spirit capable of evil action, and even of development in evil activity. This also has its purpose. The good spirit attains its noblest perfections in combating the evil. Without evil we could not conceive of good; without vice we could not conceive of virtue. Man's task, therefore, is to conquer and suppress the evil spirit, and to encourage and develop the

good; to avail himself of every opportunity for the exercise of virtue and the suppression of vice; and thus, by constant effort, to make the evil spirit minister to the good.

Certain it is, that this Heaven-born spirit is capable of infinite expansion, of boundless improvement. "The powers of nature," says Buckle, "notwithstanding their apparent magnitude, are limited and stationary; but the powers of man, so far as experience and analogy can guide us, are unlimited; nor are we possessed of any evidence which authorizes us to assign even an imaginary boundary at which the human intellect will, of necessity, be brought to a stand." What an inspiring thought this is! Is not this one of the intimations and assurances of immortality? How can we conceive of an eternity of sameness of existence? The future life must be, if at all, an immortality of progress, a ceaseless progression in all glorious things. "The eye of man hath not seen, nor hath his heart conceived, what is reserved for him that loves the Lord." Goethe says: "Man should believe in immortality; he has a right to this belief; it corresponds with the wants of his nature, and he may believe in the promises of religion. To me, the eternal existence of my soul is proved from my idea of activity: if I work on incessantly till my death, nature is bound to give me another form of existence when the present one can no longer sustain my spirit."

All great minds have believed in the immortality of the soul. "Thought," says Bulwer Lytton, "is continually flowing through my mind. I scarcely know a moment in which I am awake and not thinking. Nor by thought do I mean mere reverie or castle-building; but a sus-

tained process of thinking. I have always in my mind some distinct train of ideas which I seek to develop, or some positive truth which I am trying to arrive at. If I lived for a million years, I could not exhaust a millionth part of my thoughts. I know that I must be immortal, if only because I think."

Some people speak of hereditary talent, hereditary genius. This is a matter, the transmission of genius from father to son, which is by no means certain. Good authorities deny it altogether, and declare that there is no proof of its existence. To point to examples here and there tends as much to disprove as to prove it; for these can doubtless be met by quite as many of a contrary nature. Mr. Buckle denies not only the existence of hereditary talent, but of hereditary vices and hereditary virtues; and declares that "whoever will critically examine the evidence will find that there is no proof of their existence." Virtues and talents cannot be bequeathed like an heirloom: they must, like other powers, be *developed* by education, by contact with the world, by experience; they must be made to *grow up* out of that free human nature and large general capacity common to all men. Every man must work out his own salvation. Who ever found that the sons of clergymen and saintly persons were noted for virtue? Who ever found that the sons of philosophers, heroes, and martyrs were like their fathers? There is a society in England whose object is to remove the children of criminals and paupers to the colonies; and the experience of this society tends to confirm Mr. Buckle's view. Its annual report shows that "the children of habitual and hardened criminals turn out, as far as can be judged, just as well as any other; the

two things needful being that they be removed when quite young from the vicious atmosphere in which they are born, and that the severance from the old influences be complete and final." Thus the Creator gives every child an equal chance at the start in life.

The philosopher Locke gives it as his opinion that "men have been much the same for natural endowments in all ages;" and Sir William Jones declares his conviction that "all men are born with an equal capacity for improvement." Now although it is true that every man comes into the world with certain peculiarities and proclivities derived from his ancestors, certain moods of temperament which he knows were peculiar to his fathers; yet the *development* and *formation* of his character, the *shape* and *bent* which these peculiarities take, are determined by the surroundings, the associations, the training, and the various experiences of early life. A part of that very development of character is the power he acquires of controlling these moods of temperament. Look at Byron. There was little or no genius in his ancestry, but a tremendous quantity of that savage, fiery, devil-may-care temperament of the Highland Celt, which he inherited in full measure from the maternal side of his house; and that dogged, moody, defiant temper of the Anglo Saxon, which he derived from the paternal side. Now had he only been carefully trained, had he only been taught to watch these tendencies and to govern them, that temperament might have been brought fully under control, and the character of the man, without detriment to his genius, might have been altogether different. His *development* was bad, hence *the man* turned out bad.

It would indeed be hard if any child found that, by

the inherent qualities of his nature, it was impossible for him to be good. This would make him an irresponsible being. No matter what his tendencies may be, he can govern them, he can conquer them. The Creator has given him this power. We all have vicious tendencies; some perhaps more than others;—but we all have good tendencies too; some perhaps more than others;—and it is certain that every man of superior character becomes what he is, not by birth or blood, but by controlling and subordinating his evil tendencies, and by fostering and cultivating his good ones. Knowledge fosters virtue; virtue is the outcome of culture; and all men know that happiness lies on the side of culture and virtue. Every good companion, every good book, every good thought, helps the good tendencies; and *vice versa.* Let every young man cause this truth to sink deep into his mind; for if he persistently strive after the good, he will in time, no matter what tendencies he inherits, become a good, virtuous, and happy man.

The brain of every child assumes a certain character from the constant beating upon it of external influences: influences which are brought to bear through the eye, the ear, the hand, and the other organs of sense; almost through the pores of the skin;—for every sight and sound, from earliest infancy onward, leave an impression on this sensitive organ, the brain, and cause the child and youth to become what he is. Then come school-training and business training; the training of personal experience among men, and the training derived from literature and art; the training of the world and society; and all these together make the man what he is. We must never forget that we are constantly in-

fluencing others and constantly being influenced by others. If our development, thus derived, were taken away, nothing would remain but pure savagery. "As soon as we are born," says Goethe, "the world begins to work upon us, and this goes on to the end. And, after all, what can we call our own, except energy, strength, and will? If I could give an account of all that I owe to great predecessors and contemporaries, there would remain but a small balance in my favor." If such a man as Goethe could say this, how much more men of ordinary capacity?

"We are beginning to doubt," says Mr. W. S. Walsh, "whether there is any such great difference between one man and another as our fathers were fond of imagining. The vital force which feeds the brain of the thinker is the same force that animates the muscle of the athlete. Some men may, indeed, be born with more vitality than others; but the form in which that vitality shall assert itself is determined by the accident of environment or hereditary predisposition. If it goes to build up the muscles, there will be less left for the brain. If too large a proportion goes into the brain, the body will suffer. Or if it goes into any special faculty of brain or body, the other faculties will suffer. There are certain tribes of Indians who are marvellous horsemen, because for generations all their vitality has been expended on the muscles that are brought into play by horsemanship. But the other muscles suffer in proportion. These Indians cannot walk a hundred yards without fatigue. The blacksmith's arm, the ballet-dancer's leg, are splendidly developed, while the rest of the body may be only ordinary. What is true of the physical is true of the mental man. A genius is a person

in whom some one faculty or set of faculties has been abnormally developed at the expense of the rest."

Thus we see that it is not what we get from our fathers, but what we do for ourselves, that makes us what we are.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TWO PITTS—INFLUENCES THAT FORM THE MIND.

LET me say a word or two more on this subject of heredity. It is beyond question that few men and women of genius were either fathered or mothered by parents possessing genius, and that few of the sons and daughters of men and women of genius were like their parents. Who ever heard of a great poet being the son or daughter of a great poet? Who ever heard that the son of a great ruler or a great soldier turned out equal to his father? Which of his many great and noble qualities did Marcus Aurelius transmit to his infamous son Commodus? What resemblance had the son of Cromwell or of Napoleon to his father? What common man ever had such idiotic descendants as the great Charlemagne? What similarity of character had the mean-spirited and treacherous son of Egmont, or the poor-spirited and mediocre son of Chesterfield, with his father? Nay, what similarity of character had the younger Pitt, himself famous as a statesman, with his father, the great Earl of Chatham? Both were prime minister of England; both were great party leaders; both are the authors of famous meas-

ures; both are regarded by many as men of genius: and yet, what a world-wide difference there is between them! While the father was a man of noble, heroic, great-hearted character, of splendid executive ability and spontaneous, natural eloquence, an orator of the highest rank, whose utterances struck deep into the hearts of his countrymen, and still remain the watch-words of patriots; the son was a man of showy and shallow parts, of illiberal ideas and narrow policy, a speaker whose sonorous sentences were little more than gilded commonplaces, which tickled the fancy and deluded the judgment of his followers, and failed to secure the smallest attention by posterity. While the father was a far-seeing, wise-planning statesman, whose every measure was a splendid conception and a decided success, the son never projected a single measure of any benefit to his country;—while the father's great talents and majestic presence awed the king into silence and compelled submission, the son's mean capacity and narrow prejudices suited the small mind of his sovereign, and ministered to his contemptible notions of statesmanship. While the father supported the natural ally of England and Protestantism, Frederick the Great, the son's greatest achievement consisted in feeing foreign princes and potentates to enable their troops to fight the armies of Napoleon, the parvenu emperor who had no blue blood in his veins. While the father was the projector of wise and beneficent measures, some of which, rejected by the Parliaments of his own day, have since been adopted by other Parliaments, the son was the author of the most stupendous blunders ever committed by any man entrusted with power, having plunged England into a boundlessly expensive and

meaningless war, which entailed hundreds of millions of debt, converted his country into a nation of paupers, ruined almost every class of people except army-contractors and government-jobbers, and created a stupendous load of taxation, under which England has staggered for over half a century, and from which she will probably never recover. While the father was a man of large, liberal, and progressive ideas, who understood the character and respected the rights of the people, the son was a cold, supercilious, haughty aristocrat, who knew as little of the character and cared as little for the rights of the people as his thick-headed master George the Third.

Well might Sir Philip Francis exclaim, at the conclusion of his oration on Chatham, "But he is dead, and has left nothing in this world that resembles him." Well might Bagehot say that "Pitt did not grow, but was cast: experience taught him nothing, and he did not believe he had anything to learn." Who will say that the younger Pitt inherited the genius of his father? Who will say that he equalled or resembled him? As well might you say, that that perfidious, hypocritical scoundrel, Louis XIV., inherited the noble and generous character of his grandfather, Henry IV.*

Then again, who has not heard of persons of no

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* Mr. E. E. Hale, writing in The New England Magazine concerning his visits to Emerson, says: "I remember perfectly how delicately he put me down one night when I had gone down to Concord with Galton's 'Heredity' in my bag, and was full of Galton's admirable stories about the continuation of the same line of life and thought in certain families,—the stories of the Pitts, for instance, and, what Galton delights in most of all, the story of our house of Adams. Once and again I tried to bring Mr.

capacity whatever being the fathers and mothers of persons of great capacity? When Hugh Miller called upon his young and talented friend, William Ross, at his home, he found his father "one of the most vapid men he ever knew—a man literally without an idea and almost without the recollection of a fact." And yet the son of this man was a bright, enthusiastic, rarely gifted youth, who possessed marked genius for art and literature. "The sacred gift of genius," says Mr. T. Spencer Baynes, "has ever been, and will perhaps ever be, inexplicable. No analysis, however complete, of the forces acting on the individual mind, can avail to extract this vital secret. The element of race, country, parentage, and education, though all powerful features in its development, fail adequately to account for the mystery involved in preëminent genius. Like the unseen wind from heaven, it bloweth where it listeth, and the inspired voice is gladly heard of men; but none can tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth."

Mr. Buckle, who concedes that extraordinary men have usually extraordinary mothers, endeavors to show that these men owe their distinction not to the qualities which they have inherited from their mothers, but to the *development* which they have received from them; to "the tender and watchful care, the intimate and endear-

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**Emerson up to take some interest in this; but he would only take the civil interest of one who has a persistent and fussy guest to entertain. But at last he said, 'No, there is nothing in it. If there were we should have Weimar to-day full of Schillers and Goethes and Richters; and we should have had Athens in the time of Paul full of another set of Socrates and Platos and Pericles. And it was not so.' I have taken much less stock in heredity since he made that suggestion about Athens and Weimar."**

ing connection, between the deductive mind of the mother and the inductive mind of the son, which has been unconsciously established from a very early period. The understanding of the boy," he continues, "softened yet elevated by the imagination of his mother, is saved from that degeneracy toward which the mere understanding always inclines; it is saved from being too cold, matter-of-fact, prosaic; and the different properties and functions of the mind are more harmoniously developed than would otherwise be practicable. Thus it is that by the mere play of the affections, the unfinished man is ripened and completed. Thus it is that the most touching and most sacred form of human love, the purest, highest, and holiest compact of which our nature is capable, becomes an engine for the advancement of knowledge and the discovery of truth."

All which causes me to reflect, that although we cannot choose our own mothers, we can at least those of our children; and that the man who chooses a dull, ignorant, or unhealthy woman for a wife, be she ever so wealthy or physically attractive, commits a stupid, an irremediable blunder; nay, a crime; for he chains himself to a body of death, and sentences his offspring to life-long imbecility and wretchedness. "A man's mother is his misfortune, but his wife is his fault," is the witty remark of Walter Bagehot.

Who can doubt that the mother of Shakespeare was a woman of superior character? Who can doubt that the tutorless boy owed to her the development of his wonderful mind? Hudson says: "All the kings and queens that have ever lived are but dust in the balance compared with the mother of Shakespeare." And yet, though thousands of volumes have been written about

the kings and queens, nobody thought it worth his while to write a word about the mother of Shakespeare! We know nothing, or next to nothing, of her; and little more of him. Taking the young poet as the hero, and beginning with the courtship of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden; continuing with the life and adventures of their gifted son, as school-boy, apprentice, glover, lawyer's clerk, poacher, player and play-writer; as the commissioned dramatic poet of King James and Queen Elizabeth; the friend of Southampton, Montgomery, Raleigh, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, and the leading spirit in the wit-combats and merry-meetings at the Boar's-Head Tavern—what a field for a romance by a Scott or a Lytton! Perhaps some man of genius may yet supply, by the power of imagination, all we have lost by the annihilation of the materials for the life of Shakespeare.

And here, while speaking of the character and influence of women, let me quote the remark which a lady connected with Vassar College made to me the other day, concerning the marital relations of Americans: "Do you know why there are so many divorces nowadays? It is because the husband, coming daily in contact with other people, with men of business, men of ideas, speculators, inventors, writers, and so on, and with the new ideas in newspapers, magazines, etc., *grows away from his wife*, who, in her narrow home-circle, remains *stationary*. How often we hear wives complaining of their husbands being so interested in their newspaper or book that they have no time for them! This is because the wives take no interest in these things; gossip is the only subject they take an interest in; and their husbands have got beyond that.

Give your daughters a good, broad, classical education, and their husbands will never grow away from them."

If a wife wants to keep up with her husband, let her read history and biography, and not fiction. These are the works that will give her something to talk about. What deep lessons of patriotism, honor, truth, and all that is noble and grand in human conduct, might be instilled in the minds of our youth, by the proper handling of history! I feel like shouting to every young teacher in the land: Drop your text-books; cease poking hard names and unprofitable dates into the heads of your scholars; study your history thoroughly yourself; then narrate and describe to your scholars, with all the power of voice, gesture, look, and tone you can command, what *you* have learned in history! Place the noble and generous characters side by side with the mean; hold up the noble to admiration and the mean to detestation; let them *feel* the difference; and you will, without ever mentioning the word *religion* or *morality*, teach them more lasting and impressive lessons in both than ever moralist or religionist taught his congregation of devoted hearers!

Although we cannot create new powers, we can bend those we have in any given direction. Physiologists tell us that the brain of a man grows till his twenty-eighth year; that is, it takes twenty-eight years to attain its full development. If this is so, why should one not be able, by his own efforts, to give this long-growing organ a particular bent, a peculiar character? Why should *the will* not be brought to bear on the formation of *the brain*, as well as of *the backbone*? I do not see why one should not be able, by pursuing a particular line of life, to rouse and develop special powers in the mind, to stamp it with

a character all its own. We are all constantly changing, and we should certainly be able to determine the nature of that change. "Though our character is formed by circumstances," says Mr. John Stuart Mill, "our own desires can do much to shape those circumstances; and what is really inspiriting and ennobling in the doctrine of free will, is the conviction that *we have real power over the formation of our own character;* our will, by influencing some of our circumstances, *being able to modify our future habits or capacities of willing.*" These are noble words, and highly encouraging to every young person seeking after a higher development of his powers. We have only to change our situation, our associations and surroundings in life, to change the whole current and character of our thoughts; and hence our character, mental and moral. How is it that you can tell a lawyer, a teacher, or a clergyman almost as soon as you begin to talk to him? He has acquired from his occupation a certain look, a certain mode of thinking and of speaking, which betrays him. Why cannot any one, then, by following a certain profession, or a certain line of thought, acquire any style of thinking and speaking?

## CHAPTER XXV.

HOW LIFE DEVELOPS TALENT—STEPPING FROM STUDY TO PRODUCTION.

IN the last chapter I spoke of the physical influence of culture on the brain, and of the peculiar bent which a long train of circumstances may give to the mind of an individual or a nation. Another very striking example has occurred to me. Who are the greatest money-makers of the present day? Who are they that control the world by the immensity of their capital? The Jews; the once despised, hated, persecuted, oppressed, maltreated, but now triumphant Jews. How have they come by this character? how have they acquired this power? It is well known that this race has, for many centuries and in all European countries, been forbidden to become citizens or subjects, to own land, to till the soil, to bear arms, to take part in any of the concerns and interests which their neighbors and countrymen have taken part in. What was the result? They were compelled to restrict their exertions to barter, to buying and selling, to exchange, to the accumulation of wealth by the use of wealth in every possible way. They became the inventors of letters of credit, of bills of exchange, and of book-keeping; and they are now the largest operators in loans and exchange in the whole world. Thus, having been shut out from other careers

and compelled to devote their whole energies to money-getting, they have acquired a genius for the acquisition of wealth; they have become masters in this science; they have amassed millions where others have acquired thousands; they have grown rich where others have been starving; they have, in short, become the greatest money-makers in the world. By their enormous capital they now control the industries of the world, and exercise greater power over the Christians than the Christians ever exercised over them. The Christians crushed them by brute force; they are now crushing the Christians by intellectual and commercial forces. The Christians excluded them from the labor market; they are now excluding the Christians from all markets. The Christians tried to save their souls by terror and torture; they are now grinding up the souls of Christians through the organs of public opinion. They have become masters of the situation, and have turned the tables on their enemies in the most consummate manner. "Thus the whirligig of Time brings in his revenges." As they possess the sinews of war, not only princes and potentates, but governments and nations sue for their favor, and peace or war is often dependent upon their decision. The "bloody instructions" they received have "returned to plague the inventors" with a vengeance.

M. Drumont, in his lately published book on the French Jews, "La France Juive," shows that every daily newspaper in Paris, except two, are in the hands of the Jews; that all the railroads, the banks, the exchange, and many of the great public offices, are owned or controlled by them; that the Tonquin war was brought on by the machinations of scheming Jewish capitalists; that the Tunisian war was caused by a de-

cree issued by a Jewish member of the government; that wherever a Jew has been implicated in crime, he has always been able to get off through the powerful influence of his wealthy brethren; that, in short, all the power, wealth, and substance of the land are fast passing into their hands, and they have become the arbiters of the destinies of a people who once hated, despised, and persecuted them.

Thus we see that this peculiar people, by having been compelled to devote their whole mental energies to one pursuit, have become the greatest and most successful money-makers in the world; and have thus proved—which is my only reason for mentioning them at all—that the mind may, by being bent wholly in one direction, acquire a peculiar character; or, in other words, may be developed at will in any given direction.

It is life that develops mental power; it is life that develops genius and character; it is life that develops heroism, and all great qualities. Many a man, who has turned out a hero, would, but for the accidental circumstances which gave a turn to his youth, have turned out a robber; and many a robber would, but for certain unlucky circumstances of his early youth, have turned out a hero. Circumstances are constantly moulding and making men; and circumstances are constantly bringing to light those that are moulded and made.

"Great emergencies," says Mr. Wm. S. Walsh, "call forth the great soul. War in the twinkling of an eye turns village drunkards and pettifogging lawyers into generals and statesmen. Love transforms Cymon from a brute into a man. Necessity makes Shakespeare a dramatist; accident reveals to Scott his true power." Scarcely a week passes without some instance, in the

storms and calamities of life, of plain humble men and women acting the part of heroes and heroines; scarcely a month passes without some example of a lowly person rising to station of command and performing feats which do honor to human nature. We have lately seen how heroically some of those horror-stricken yet undaunted citizens of Charleston ventured in, amid tottering walls and yawning foundations, to save their comrades from destruction, and how they shared their little all with those who had lost everything. We have seen the telegraph operator at Johnstown, a delicate young woman, working the wires till the last moment, when she was swept away to destruction. No matter how appalling a fate may be overtaking human beings, there will still be some ready to venture in to save them; no matter what fate is imminent, some will risk their lives, if there be any prospect of saving their fellows; for in heroic souls, the feeling of pity for human suffering is greater than the fear of death. The other day two New York firemen flew with their axes into the cellar of a flaming building, in order to free a comrade who was caught by a falling beam; and they had hardly accomplished their perilous task when the entire building fell with a crash! How the blood tingles and the heart throbs on hearing of such a deed as that! One involuntarily exclaims, "God bless them!" Though unknown to fame, though obscure and unrewarded, the authors of such a deed deserve to be remembered; for they are worthy of taking rank with him who, against a whole army, stoutly

**Kept the bridge**
**In the brave days of old!**

One of the most heroic lives on record is that of the

late Father Damien, who voluntarily took up his abode, while still young and strong, among the leprosy-stricken inhabitants of the Island of Molokai in the Pacific, and worked and preached and taught among them until he too fell a victim of the dread disease! Greater heroism than this can hardly be conceived.

You may be sure that among your daily companions, among those whom you meet in the ordinary affairs of every-day life, there are many who carry the sacred fire of genius and of heroism in their hearts; many who need nothing but the call of duty or danger, of necessity or adversity, to make it burst forth into flame, and shed a halo of glory around their names.

**So nigh is grandeur to our dust,**
**So near to God is man,**
**When duty whispers low, *Thou must*,**
**The youth replies, *I can*.**

Thousands, unknown to the world, are at this moment living heroic lives: carrying herculean burdens; bearing up under crushing calamities; fighting manfully and hopefully against dire misfortune; and suffering in silence the most intolerable grievances.

**For there are lofty spirits in disguise—**
**Heroes in common garb, whose meek brows bear**
**The thorny crown of perfect sacrifice,**
**Whose simple souls are kingly unaware.**

**Lives to one sacred mission consecrate,**
**Of duty death alone can swerve them from,**
**Or love that glorifies their lowly state,**
**Through fiery pangs of life-long martyrdom.**

**They tread with us the dusty paths of time,**
**Or lie in uncommemorative sod,**
**Unrecognized, unhonored, yet sublime,**
**Their greatness witnessed only by their God.***

*C. L. HILDRETH.

"He who believes that this world is peopled with knaves and fools," says an anonymous writer, "does not strive to fit himself for the companionship of heroes and angels. When all the illusions have vanished from human nature, the cynicism remains; and the great chain of kindly, charitable deeds that is eventually going down into the depths of human misery, and slowly, but surely uplifting humanity to a higher, happier plane, are not wrought by the cynic or the misanthrope. He who believes in the heroism of others, whose pulse quickens at the hearing of noble deeds, whose heart glows at the recital of brave and mighty enterprises; he too will strive to climb the heights, and, in any pressing juncture of affairs, will not fail, through indolence or greed, to do his duty; he too will be a hero.

**All actual heroes are essential men,**
**And all men, possible heroes;—**

but there is no making a hero of a man that has lost faith in heroism." It needs years to acquire that mellowness of character, that gentle, kindly, and patient disposition which wins all hearts and sheds joy in all minds. One must have suffered to feel for the suffering; one must have known defeat to feel for the defeated; one must have felt the vanity of riches, the fragility of friendship, and the uncertainty of life, to gain that wisdom which "passeth understanding." Would that a man could learn some of these things while he has the health, strength, and lustiness of youth! Would that there were some less painful road to Wisdom than that of Experience! But one must learn either by one's own experience or by that of others; by taking to heart the counsels and the lessons that others have learned through

suffering and sorrow; or by going through the same ordeal one's self. There is no royal road to wisdom any more than to knowledge.*

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* The following passage, from the pen of Christian Garve, on the development of talent, is so instructive, that I have thought it worth translating for the benefit of young writers:

"The employment of a little breath, or of a few strokes of the pen, to express a thought, however difficult this may sometimes appear, will be found richly rewarded by the distinctness, the order, and the vividness which the thought thereby acquires. It is seldom that so great a result is attained by means so small; but such is the fact.

"As long as man was without the power of speech, he merely saw, heard, felt, and tasted: he did not think. And before man had learned the art of writing, he thought little and spoke badly. It is the tongue and the pen that have made man what he is, and that will make him what he is to be. His conceptions become clear by his endeavor to communicate them, and they become logical and orderly by his endeavor to give them a permanent form; and it is these two endeavors that have rendered his conceptions capable of expansion and improvement. This road, which the whole human race has taken in order to become wise, is still the only road for individuals. . . .

"The soul of man is like a painter, who paints either originals from nature or copies from good originals. The originals are his own impressions, his own observations and conclusions; the copies are the conceptions he has gained from instruction and reading. Good painters paint copies only as practice pieces, to enable them to acquire a correct eye and a firm hand; bad ones go no further, and base their whole reputation on such work.

"Everything depends upon your capacity of looking at the experiences of others (for all knowledge may finally be reduced to experience) as if they were your own, as if you had drawn the same conclusions from them as those who had made them. [That, I imagine, is the peculiar power of the poet and the novelist.] Before you think for yourself, you must first learn to fol-

low the thoughts of others. Speech is the first step; reading the second. Then comes the third. From a reader, take one step more, and become a writer!

"And here is the way to do it. When you read, separate the thought from the expression: never mind the words, grasp the thought: turn it over in your mind; meditate on it for a moment; then take away its ornament, the finery of expression, and interrupt the pleasure of continuous reading until you have set down, in a few words, what the author has perhaps taken pages to express. By writing these words down, they become your own, as well as the thought which they express. Big books can, in this way, be reduced to pages, which are of more value to you than the books themselves, and which bring you nearer the power of writing yourself something worth reading. For these summaries of thought do not long remain the abbreviated thoughts of others. *Your own will soon begin to grow, to develop in them.* Ideas fly from one to another like electric sparks. When the soul is once in motion, and begins to work; when she has once the thread of thought in her hand, she goes rapidly from the imitation of the thoughts of others to the production of her own; she casts aside the scaffolding from which she rose, and moves along by her own independent powers. Thus, before you are aware, your own thoughts rise from the treasure-house of your experience and demand utterance; and this utterance, which now comes easily, would perhaps never have come at all but for the practice which gave rise to it."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE INFLUENCE OF WEALTH—"THE ACCIDENT WHICH PRODUCED THAT PARTICULAR DESIGNATION OF MIND CALLED GENIUS."

MANY a hard-working student envies the lot of those who have wealth, ease, and freedom from the cares of a bread-winning existence.

But such a life is by no means the most favorable for intellectual work. It has been found by experience that a certain amount of bread-winning labor is more favorable to intellectual activity than entire freedom from exertion. Charles Lamb did more and better work while working as a clerk in the India House, than when he got his pension and had all his time to himself.

"When literature is the sole business of life," says Rogers, the banker poet, "it becomes a drudgery; when we are able to resort to it only at certain hours, it is a charming relaxation. In my early years I was a banker's clerk, obliged to be at the desk every day from ten till five o'clock, and I shall never forget the delight with which, on returning home, I used to read and write during the evening." I have had precisely the same experience myself, and this book, and the other

efforts of which I have been guilty, are the result of pleasant hours of recreation after bread-winning labor. Such labor freshens and strengthens the mind, and prepares it for intellectual exertion of a free and voluntary nature. "How unfortunate it is for a boy," said James Gordon Bennett to George W. Childs, "to have rich parents! If you and I had been born that way, we would never have done anything worth mentioning." And Jean Paul Richter, who suffered as much perhaps from poverty as any literary man who ever lived, said he would not for worlds have been born rich.

Although, to use Mr. Bright's splendid figure, the members of the English House of Lords "enter the Temple of Honor, not through the Porch of Merit, but through the Sepulchres of their Ancestors," none but the workers ever attain distinction within the precincts of that famous temple; none but the workers ever make themselves heard with effect either inside or outside of those sacred walls. Like Raleigh, all those who have attained distinction "toiled terribly." Lord Palmerston never quailed at any amount of labor to attain his end, and Sir Robert Peel devoted himself so thoroughly to business that he is said to have known the Blue Books by heart. Lord Byron declared that at eighteen he had read nearly all the great books of modern literature; and Lord Lytton worked with such unabated zeal in the pursuit of knowledge and in the cultivation of his powers that he, like Lord Bacon, "took all knowledge for his province," and shrank at no amount of labor to attain some "coigne of vantage" in literary or artistic skill. The same may be said of Lords Burleigh, Chatham, Bolingbroke, Derby, Russell, Shaftesbury and Salisbury. These all owe their distinction to their own

efforts, to their determination to excel in the career they had chosen, and not to any advantage derived from their rank or fortune.

Of course, if I should cite the names of those who *made themselves* peers,—those who were not, as Lord Thurlow said, "the accidents of an accident,"—my list of examples would be much larger; but that these men won their way to distinction by *work*, as well as by *talent*, goes, as the French say, without saying. A single sentence from one of Lord Campbell's letters to his father, excusing himself for not coming to Scotland on a visit, will sufficiently illustrate the way in which these men climbed into the Temple of Honor: "To have any chance of success I must be more steady than other men; I must be in chambers when they are at the theatre; I must study when they are asleep; I must, above all, remain in town when they are in the country."

Among the nobility of France, labor is almost unknown—and so is distinction. M. Drumont, in his recent remarkable work showing the boundless wealth of the French Jews, confesses that the meanest Jew in France has more learning in his little finger than a French nobleman in all his body. It is almost impossible to conceive the utter ignorance and intellectual imbecility of the degenerate aristocracy of France, whose whole lives are taken up with pleasures, shows, and sensations. The men of ability in France, those who have created and who now maintain the Republic, are all of the working stamp, men who have fought their way upward by sheer force of character, by study and superior knowledge. The men of rank are mere idlers.

We have had the same experience in our own coun-

try. Success is obtained by the same means in every country. All the world knows that most of those who have attained distinction in this country have done so by their own efforts, and generally in the face of great difficulties; and this not only in commercial, but in legal, literary, artistic, political, and almost every other career. I need not cite names; the fact is too well known. It is the *inference* I wish the reader to draw that is important. Wealth and ease are not to be coveted by him who wishes to attain intellectual distinction; that is, they are not to be coveted with the idea that these are the means to that end. The struggle to obtain knowledge and to advance one's self in the world strengthens the mind, disciplines the faculties, matures the judgment, promotes self-reliance, and gives one independence of thought and force of character. Emerson used to say, while looking at his delicately-reared little son, "Poor fellow! how much he loses in not having to go through the hard experiences I had in my youth!" And Mr. Nordhoff, in his excellent little book, "Politics for young Americans," has this capital sentence: "A boy who is coddled by his parents; who sits behind the stove in winter when others are playing in the snow; who lies late abed, and has his pockets full of candy; who must not go into the water until he has learned to swim; and whose precious life and health are the object of his own and his parents' incessant solicitude, may look with pity upon his neighbor, who runs about bare-footed, gets up early to feed the cows, has few clothes and no candy, and must work for his food; but all human experience and all history show that the hardier boy has by far the best chance of becoming a useful man and making an honorable figure in the world."

"It looks," says Mr. John Swinton, "as if the rich men kept out of the kingdom of heaven were also excluded from the kingdom of brains. Here in New York, Boston and Philadelphia are a swell-mob of millionaires, thousands strong,—some of them, like the Astors, Vanderbilts, and many Knickerbockers, running through three or four generations of fortune;—and yet, through the whole ruck of them, and in all their ranks, there is not, and never has been, a single man possessed of the higher intellectual qualities that flower out in literature or eloquence. Not one of them has produced a book worth printing, a poem worth reading, or a speech worth listening to,—not one. They are all struck with intellectual sterility. They sit dumb under the upas-tree of their millions. . . . They go to college; they travel abroad; they hire the dearest masters; they keep libraries among their furniture; and some of them buy pictures. But, for all that, their brains wither—often by their own vices or tomfooleries—and barrenness is the result. The fruits of intellect or of genius do not grow among them. They are out of the kingdom of heaven, out of the republic of brains."

This is severe; but there is a large measure of truth in it. Great wealth is as unfavorable to the development of talent as extreme poverty. But the latter is more frequently overcome than the former. Genius takes much more kindly to poor surroundings than to rich; and while she often takes up her abode in the smoky cribs of the poor, it is seldom that we meet her in the perfumed chambers of the rich. Genius so loves the companionship of Toil that they are hardly ever divorced. The most favorable situation in life, however, and that in which Genius is most frequently

found, is that happy middle station in which one has enough to live comfortably without severe exertion, and in which one can, without anxiety or apprehension, enjoy the common blessings of life.

Speaking of her father's failure in business, and the consequent reduction of her family to poverty, Miss Martineau says: "Many and many a time since have we said that, but for that loss of money, we might have lived on in the ordinary provincial method of ladies with small means, sewing and economizing and growing narrower every year; whereas, by being thrown, while it was yet time, on our own resources, we have worked hard and usefully, won friends, reputation and independence, seen the world abundantly, abroad and at home, and, in short, have truly lived instead of vegetated."

Some writers seem to think that certain accidental occurrences, certain peculiar experiences or surroundings of one's youth, are the producing causes of genius. "The accident which produced that particular designation of mind called genius" is the phrase they use. Nothing could be more erroneous. No circumstances, no peculiar experiences or accidents, can produce genius. If it is not innate, if it is not a natural characteristic of the mind, it never can be produced or created by anything. Circumstances may influence, awaken, develop, excite genius; circumstances or surrounding objects may feed and fan the mystic fire into flame; but they never can produce it.

The associations and surroundings of the youth of Burns, Scott and Shakespeare are sometimes mentioned as of this genius-producing description. Let us look at these for a moment. Burns was born and reared in a

part of Scotland which is all that is picturesque, romantic and tradition-haunted, and his mind was early filled with the weird tales and idle superstitions of the peasantry. "In my infant and boyish days," he says, "I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, deadlights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry, and had so strong an effect on my imagination that to this day, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp lookout in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more skeptical in such matters than I am, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors." And there was hardly a hill, a dale, or a stile in his native Ayr around which there hung not the memory of some romantic tale or supernatural appearance.

Walter Scott had, in early youth, not only heard a great number of old tales and romantic stories concerning the heroes of his country, but lived in a neighborhood noted for its uncommon beauty and for the number of places and scenes celebrated in the annals of his country. This was his grandfather's farm, near Kelso, on which he passed the early years of his boyhood, and near which was the ruined tower of Smailholm, the Eildon Hills, the river Tweed, Dryburgh Abbey, and other scenes and objects famous in poetry and romance. "These," says Chambers, "fed the fancy and stirred the feelings of the lonely and contemplative boy."

The same may be said of Shakespeare. Warwick, the county in which he was born, is one of the most picturesque parts of England, noted for many tale-haunted spots and historic battle-grounds. "The whole country about Stratford," says Washington Irving, "is poetic ground. Every old cottage that I saw I fancied into some resort of Shakespeare's boyhood, where he had acquired his intimate knowledge of rustic life and manners, and heard those legendary tales and wild superstitions which he has woven like witchcraft into his dramas. For in his time, we are told, it was a popular amusement in winter evenings to sit round the fire, and tell merry tales of errant knights, queens, lovers, lords, ladies, giants, dwarfs, thieves, cheaters, witches, fairies, goblins and friars."

Now, although all these things did undoubtedly, as Burns says, "cultivate the latent seeds of poetry," it is nonsense to say that they created the faculty; it is nonsense to say that these were the things that "produced that particular designation of mind called genius." For if this were true, all that one would have to do to become a man of genius would be to go and reside in some genius-producing country; or, at least, send one's children to reside there, and feed their minds on such idle tales as are here enumerated.

Scott was fortunate in having just the early influences best adapted to develop his genius for poetry and romance. "In his brain," says James Sully, "the wild life of his ancestors survived as a perennial spring of ballad poetry and romance." All that was fascinating in the history of his country—its stirring old songs, wild border tales, romantic legends, chivalric love-adventures, martial encounters and clan feuds, together with a per-

sonal acquaintance with its ancient tale-haunted castles and reverend abbeys, its famous battle-fields and imposing mountain-fastnesses—all these fed his fancy for poetry, for the noble and romantic in by-gone times; all these inflamed his imagination with pictures of the lives and deeds of his heroic countrymen, and enabled him to paint with accuracy the lives and surroundings of the men and women of past ages. These were the circumstances that *stirred, excited* "that particular designation of mind called genius;" these were the breezes that fanned the precious flame into life, and these were the sources whence he drew, in after life, many a tale that delighted the world. But it was just because he was a man of genius that these scenes had such an effect upon him; for had he been an ordinary man, they would have had as little effect upon him as they had upon the thousands of others who have heard and seen the same things during their whole lives without ever thinking of making a novel or a poem of them.

And as to Robert Burns, he was impelled to write poetry as naturally as a bird is impelled to sing. From his earliest years he took to the rhyming trade; and although he knew nothing of classic or foreign literature, and had but a scanty knowledge of English literature, he courted the Muses as passionately as Spenser or Milton, Gray or Byron. Few poets owed so little to school education as Burns. Some men are cultivated into poetry; he took to it without cultivation. Some men think highly and nobly from high and noble associations; Burns thought highly and nobly amidst the humblest and commonest associations. The green fields, the bleak hills, the dreary moors; the varying river and the changing sky; the lowing cattle and the

singing birds; the mountain daisy and the field mouse; the witch and warlock stories; the national songs and fireside tales; the reading of the "big ha' Bible" and the preaching of Calvinist ministers; the "holy fairs," market gatherings, and social meetings; the hard experiences of ill-rewarded toil and the rough companionship of peasants and farmers;—these were his educators, his schoolmasters; these were the circumstances that developed, not created, "that particular designation of mind called genius;" and these things would, had he not been a man of genius, have had as little influence upon him as upon the thousands of others who have undergone the same experience without any remarkable result.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES ARE MOST FAVORABLE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENIUS?

WHEN young Marshall, afterward Chief Justice of the United States, made a journey with some friends to Virginia, and came to the mountain scenery amidst which Patrick Henry was born and brought up, he suddenly stopped, and, gazing at the mountains, exclaimed, "What a grand sight! how soul-inspiring and thought-producing! No wonder Patrick Henry was an orator; no wonder he was eloquent; how could he have been otherwise, reared amidst such sublime scenes as these!" "Young man," said an old farmer, who had accompanied the tourists, "those mountains have been there ever since Patrick Henry was born, and there has been no orator like him since!"

Nevertheless, the mountains had doubtless some influence in shaping Henry's mind. Outward scenes not only impress, but they shape; they mould and form, just as a book or a speech moulds and forms. To the eye of genius Nature speaks "a various language." The first ideas that enter the human brain are created by outward things; and the last ideas are often produced by the same cause.

Patrick Henry was the creature of circumstances. Had the Revolution not broken out, or had George III. not made such idiotic blunders, it is doubtful whether he would ever have been heard of. His genius might have been spent amidst the obscure people with whom he lived. He was, I am inclined to think, one of those men whose genius, like Mirabeau's, needed an earthquake to bring it into full play. For he was nearly forty years old when the Revolution broke out, and being too indolent to do much in the way of study, had passed the greater part of his life in angling and hunting, when events brought him into action. With men and animals, field and forest, he was on familiar terms; but with books he was little acquainted. He would have been delighted with Wordsworth's stanza:

> **One impulse from a vernal wood**
> **Can teach us more of man,**
> **Of moral evil and of good,**
> **Than all the sages can.**

His advice to young aspirants for legal honors was, "Study men, not books;" and no doubt he was a great student of this sort. But how should he have made his famous comparison between Cæsar and Brutus, Charles I. and George III., had he not read books? He would have missed the finest point in his most famous speech; or, more likely, he would never have made the speech at all.

Henry's hunting and angling life in the Virginia woods was, however, not without its advantages; for this was the school in which he acquired that love of liberty and hatred of oppression for which he was distinguished. There is, perhaps, no man in any station of life more thoroughly free and independent than

the angler and hunter, who, with gun and fishing-rod, roams at his own sweet will amidst the wild woods and flowing waters of a new country, gaining his living in the most ancient, simple and independent way, and subject to no laws but those of his own making. Is it not natural that a man accustomed to such a life should come to appreciate liberty more highly and more dearly than the dweller in cities? Is it not probable that this very independent life gave Henry that particularly strong, passionate love of liberty which characterized him? Gave Henry, did I say? Why, it was this freedom of action on the part of *all* the Colonists that made them so intolerant of restraint, of illegal taxation. That is where George III. and his advisers made their grand mistake: they imagined the Americans would be as submissive to their exactions as the inhabitants of a German duchy or an English county; never taking into account the different manner of living of the two peoples. That is where Chatham exhibited his far-reaching and superior knowledge of the people of the Colonies; for he predicted that they would, and declared that they should, resist it to the death.

Henry was a far different man from most of his compeers in the Virginia House of Burgesses, most of whom were mere lawyers, and nothing more; men accustomed to the red tape of legal forms and ceremonies, and with more respect for long-standing authority and ancient privilege than for right and justice. Henry was not only a lawyer, but a hunter, a man accustomed to the freedom and independence of the woods, and intolerant of wrong and oppression in any form. Hence his spontaneous, uncontrollable, and to them *treasonable* denunciation of arbitrary rule; hence his passion-

ate appeal for liberty, his eloquent condemnation of tyranny, and his fearless demand for united resistance to the tyrant.

Henry had failed at store-keeping and farming; and, having been induced to try the law, he seemed likely to have no better success in that, when a fortunate opportunity presented itself, which suddenly brought his genius into play. He was employed in 1755 to plead the cause of the people against an unpopular tax, which was just the subject that suited him; and in this effort he spoke so well that his words thrilled his auditors and won the object for which he spoke. It was this that carried him into the legislature, where he pronounced his matchless oration in favor of resistance to tyranny and of united action against England. So that the element in Henry's style, as an orator, which gave him his chief brilliancy and force, his passionate love of liberty, may be said to have been engendered amidst the boundless woods, the picturesque mountains, and the fast flowing rivers of his native State of Virginia.

Judging by Sir Philip Francis's (Junius's) description of Charles James Fox, there was a remarkable similarity between his mental growth and that of Patrick Henry: "They know nothing of Mr. Fox," says Sir Philip, "who think he was what is commonly called *well educated.* I know that he was directly or very nearly the reverse. His mind educated itself; not by early study or instruction, but by active listening and rapid apprehension. He said so in the House of Commons when he and Mr. Burke parted [viz., that he had learned more from the conversation of Mr. Burke than from all the books he had ever read.] His powerful understanding grew like a forest oak, not by cultivation, but by neglect." And

then, curiously enough, after remarking that his rival Pitt "was a plant of inferior order . . . who had been educated more than enough, until there was nothing natural and spontaneous left in him," he continues: "The human eye soon grows weary of an unbounded plain; sooner, I believe, than of any limited portion of space, whatever its dimensions may be. There is a calm delight, a sweet repose, in viewing the smooth-shaven verdure of a bowling-green, as long as it is new. But you must learn from repetition that wearisomeness is inseparable from the idea of a flat surface, and that flat and tiresome are synonymous. The works of nature, which command admiration at once, and never lose it, are compounded of grand inequalities."

Pitt, therefore, was the smooth-shaven lawn, while Fox was the varied, though uncultivated field. But though Fox did not read many books, he went largely into society, travelled a good deal, and observed much. He got his education by a well directed use of his eyes and ears. Brought into Parliament at nineteen, he kept his eyes and ears open and his mouth shut until he was of age, and then turned the House of Commons into a debating society in order to perfect himself as a speaker. It was thus that he became, what Burke termed him, "the greatest debater the world ever saw."

Yet his speeches do not read well: at least, they are not equal to his reputation. This is explained by the fact that he spoke for hearers, not readers; for votes, not admiration. He used to say himself, on hearing that a recently-delivered speech read well, "It is a bad speech;" and indeed this is very often the case. A speech that is conned and learned by heart, let it be ever so fine, seldom touches anybody's heart. While

many a speech that reads well had no more effect on its hearers than a tinkling cymbal, others that read badly not only charmed and captivated its hearers, but won the cause for which it was spoken. Such were the speeches, not only of Charles James Fox, but of Patrick Henry, and of Henry Clay. Their speeches, now seldom read, were noted for their power over those to whom they were addressed. Not one of these orators was a student of literature—they owed little to literary culture—but they were men of natural eloquence, and their whole aim was, not to shine, but to advance the cause for which they spoke. "'To show capacity,'" says Emerson, "is the Frenchman's idea of the object of a speech; 'to set people's shoulders to the wheel, to advance the business in hand,' is the Englishman's idea." This was Fox's idea, and it was undoubtedly Patrick Henry's and Henry Clay's idea, too. "The moment of his grandeur," says Charles Butler, speaking of Fox, "was when, after stating the argument of his adversary with much greater force than his adversary had stated it, and with much greater force than his hearers thought possible, he seized it with the strength of a giant, and tore and trampled it to destruction."

Henry Clay's power lay in a marvellously strong and winning personal influence, and the effect of his speeches came more from the insinuating and captivating manner in which they were delivered than from what they contained. Like Fox, though he was no student of literature, and cared not for books, he was fond of society, and mixed much among men. What he was naturally fond of was farming—he had one of the finest farms in Kentucky—and he knew much more about superior cattle than about superior books. Earn-

est, practical and patriotic, he needed little assistance from books to teach him what to say. When speaking in the Senate, he forgot himself as completely as if he were a father pleading for his children. On one occasion, in appealing to the President of the Senate, who had the deciding vote in some momentous conjuncture, he became so oblivious of everybody and everything but his subject, that he left his place on the floor of the Senate Chamber, and by gradual steps came down to the chair of the President, where he stood appealing to him as if none but the latter and himself were present, leaving behind him all his colleagues, who were looking at and listening to him in silent but wondering admiration. Such was Henry Clay.

There is another orator, a greater than Henry Clay or Charles James Fox, in the formation of whose capacious mind the aspect of nature had, without doubt, some considerable share. "I could not help thinking," says Mr. Stephen Allen, in his Reminiscences of Daniel Webster, "as I stood with some of his neighbors and kinsmen upon the spot where Webster first saw the light of day, that those wild bleak hills amongst which he was cradled, and those rough pastures in which he grew, had left their impress upon his soul." There is no doubt of it; for how could such a mind fail to be impressed with the scenery of a country which is called the Switzerland of America? how could the thoughts of such a man, with such surroundings, be otherwise than noble, grand and majestic? No doubt his young mind had early communed with those "wild bleak hills and rough pastures," and received a certain color from them which, more or less, tinged all his afterthought. No doubt these scenes helped to form the mind that took

those broad views of the policy and destiny of the United States, which caused him to be regarded as the greatest of American statesmen and orators.

**His daily teachers had been woods and rills,**
**The silence that is in the starry sky,**
**The sleep that is among the lonely hills.**

For he who has seen the towering heights of the White Mountains, or the boundless plains of the West, is likely to have larger conceptions of his country than he who has never left his native village. Why do men travel abroad to see famous mountains, seas, rivers, towns, and cities, if not for the enlargement of mind they produce? Does not the sight of these things broaden one's views and fill one's mind with new ideas? Was it not the sight of Mont Blanc that inspired Coleridge with the grand conceptions contained in his address to that famous mountain? Was it not Byron's journey through Spain, Italy and Greece that inspired "Childe Harold?" It is recorded of Goethe that, during his visit to Switzerland, the magnificent spectacle of vast ranges of snow mountains awoke the highest enthusiasm in his great poet heart, that his mind and soul were alike filled and uplifted, and that he lived in a constant rapture of delight.

But I shall endeavor to unfold this idea more fully in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE INFLUENCE OF SURROUNDINGS.

GRAND and noble scenes, like grand and noble music, or grand and noble pictures, poems, and statues, certainly elevate the temper of the mind, and conduce to the creation of great and lofty meditations. As the masterpieces of art raise the soul of man higher in the scale of being, so must the grand scenes of nature, which are the masterpieces of the Almighty, have a similar effect upon him. They lift him toward the divine Architect of the universe, and enable him to form noble conceptions of Him and of this wonderful world. When we read a great poem, or contemplate a great work of art, we are naturally drawn nearer the author of it in thought and feeling; and when we contemplate one of the great works of the Creator, we feel awed like one who stands in the presence of Omnipotence. Coleridge exclaims, in the presence of Mont Blanc:

> **O dread and silent Mount! I gazed upon thee**
> **Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,**
> **Didst vanish from my thought—Entranced in prayer,**
> **I worshipped the Invisible alone.**

And I have read somewhere of Professor Wilson (Christopher North) raising his voice in prayer and praise, talking with the Almighty, as he walked along in the early morn among the rugged hills, shaggy

woods, and craggy peaks of his native land. Who can doubt that his prayer was inspired, partly at least, by the grandeur of the scenery that surrounded him?

> **For his great heart**
> **Might not resist the sacred influences**
> **That, from the stilly twilight of the place,**
> **. . . . . Stole over him, and bowed**
> **His spirit with the thought of boundless Power**
> **And inaccessible Majesty.**

Mr. Thackeray must have felt and acted in a similar manner while walking over the Alpine regions of Switzerland; for he thus writes to a friend: "How beautiful, how pleasant this region is! How great and affable the landscape is! It is delightful to be in the midst of such scenes—the mind gets generous ideas from them. It is keeping good company; it is keeping away mean thoughts." The great preacher, Frederick Robertson, once fell into great doubt and despondency touching the truth of Revelation and the condition of his own soul; and it was not until he had visited the giant mountains of the Tyrol that he recovered his faith and peace of mind. Under the shadow of the mighty Alps, in the presence of the most stupendous works of the Creator, he found that peace, that assurance of faith, that conviction of the existence of a Heavenly Father, which no books, no sermons, no arguments of men could give him. John Foster said, regarding a beautiful rural spot where he was to reside, that he "hoped to derive considerable influence toward simplicity and refinement from his pathetic conversations with so many charming natural scenes." "I passed my childhood among some of the grandest scenery of the North," says Mr. Edward Grieg, the Norwegian com-

poser, "and ever since I can remember, the beauty of my country has impressed me as something wonderful and magnificent beyond expression. It is our mountains, our lakes and forests which have influenced my work far more than any human being has done; and even now, though I am forty, they have the self-same power over me." And Thomas Gray, the poet, after a visit to the Scottish mountains, exclaims: "These mountains are ecstatic and ought to be visited in pilgrimage once a year. None but these stupendous creations of God know how to join so much beauty with so much horror. A fig for your poets, painters, gardeners, and clergymen that have not been among them; their imaginations can be made up of nothing but bowling-greens, flowering shrubs, horse-ponds, Fleet ditches, shell grottoes, and Chinese rails." Scott's well-known lines,

> O Caledonia, stern and wild,
> Meet nurse for a poetic child!
> Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
> Land of the mountain and the flood,

plainly indicate that the poet was himself of opinion that his native country was favorable to poetic genius. And Wordsworth, in many a beautiful passage, expressly declares that natural objects had, in his boyhood and youth, the effect of calling forth elevated thoughts and noble conceptions:

> I cannot paint
> What then I was. The bounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
> The mountains, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colors and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite; a feeling and a love
> That had no need of a remoter charm,

By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrowed from the eye. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting sun,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains, and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear; both what they half create
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature, and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Grand scenery has always been a source of inspiration to the poets; and the history of existing peoples seems to point strongly to the conclusion that a mountainous country, a country diversified by hill, dale, river, glen, lake, the sea and all its shore wonders, is much more likely to foster poetic genius than a dull, flat, monotonous country, which is apt to have a dreary and depressing influence on the mind. Mr. Buckle attributes the wonderful advancement of the Greeks in civilization to the mild and beneficent climate and the varied scenery of the country in which they lived, and the low civilization of the Hindoos to the fear-inspiring phenomena and enervating atmosphere of the country in which they live. The climate and scenery of Greece were such as to allow the reason and imagination of

its inhabitants full scope for action; there was nothing in nature to appall or to depress them, and hence everything was favorable for a natural and steady development of their powers and their consequent progress in civilization; whereas the climate and scenery of India are such as to excite the imagination to an abnormal degree, to raise images of horror and apprehension, to foster superstition, and to keep its inhabitants in dread subjection to supernatural powers. In fact every race becomes, in the course of ages, what it is largely through the influence of the climate, scenery, and soil of the country in which it lives. The soil of Europe generally is such as to compel the inhabitants to work sufficiently hard, in earning their bread, to strengthen their bodies and invigorate their minds; while the soil of India is such as to enable the inhabitants to live without much work, and thus their idle bodies become feeble and their intellects weak. So also with other countries. While the inhabitants of North America are distinguished for energy, perseverance, and intelligence, those of South America are noted for indolence, superstition and ignorance.

The contrast between the territory of Switzerland and that of Russia, great as it is, is not greater than that between the character and condition of their respective inhabitants. The Swiss are a manly, independent, free people; the Russians are a servile, submissive, enslaved people; the Swiss are characterized by wealth, official honesty, and independent thinking; the Russians by poverty, corruption, and craven superstition. Instead of slavery, degradation, and ignorance, the Swiss have freedom, manly character, and enlightenment; instead of daily fear of the dread powers that govern them,

they have steady confidence in the powers by which they govern themselves. In fact this little country presents to the world to-day the one true example of an honest democratic government, a "government of the people, for the people, and by the people;" while Russia presents the most striking example of an unmitigated and remorseless despotism. In Switzerland every legislative enactment, before it becomes a law, must first secure the sanction of the assembled people, voting in cantons, communes, or as a confederacy; every branch of trade and industry, including banking and railroads, is managed for the benefit of the whole people; there is no place for political trimmers and tricksters in this country; and altogether the Swiss are about as free and happy, as peaceful and prosperous, as any people on the face of the globe. No country has more schools and less illiteracy; no country has fewer criminals and less pauperism; no country has so many landowners and so few propertyless people; none so many (proportionately) comfortable and well-to-do citizens, and none so few monopolists and millionaires. So that a greater contrast, in every respect, than that between Russia and Switzerland cannot be conceived.*

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*** See Mr. J. W. Sullivan's admirable little book, "Direct Legislation of the Citizenship," which gives a complete account of the Swiss system of government, and shows how we may imitate it. To the young American who wishes to become familiar with the best methods of improving our city governments, this little book will be an invaluable aid; and to the thoughtful citizen who is looking for some way of overthrowing the corruptionists, this book will offer the means ready to his hand. Humboldt Library Co., New York.**

The face of a country has also a strong influence on the disposition or temperament of its inhabitants. While the dwellers in mountainous countries are generally of a cheerful, happy disposition, those of level, monotonous countries are strongly inclined to melancholy and pessimistic views. The people of the Alps, for instance, especially the peasants of the Tyrol, are celebrated for their lively disposition and their habit of constantly singing at their labor—in fact, Tyrolese songs are almost as famous as Scottish songs—whilst the Russians, the inhabitants of the plain, are noted for their sad disposition and their strong inclination toward melancholy views of life. Mr. Noble, in his interesting book on Russia, has this striking passage:

"The tendency universal in Russia is to pessimism. This penetrates all spheres of thought, gives its hues to every coterie and school, creates resemblances between the most diverse productions of the pen, restores as with a bond of gloom the shattered solidarity of society. . . . Not to be pessimistic in Russia is to be divorced from all contact and sympathy with the national life; to be cut off, either by foreign birth or by some monstrous denial of nature, from the tree of the national development. All influences and epochs have contributed to the tendency. A monotonous landscape, the loss of free institutions, Byzantinism with its cruel law-giving and ascetic tyranny, the fiscal burdens of the new State, the antitheses suggested by European culture, the crushing of the individual, the elimination from Russian life of all those healthy activities which engage citizenship in other countries, the harassing restrictions upon thought and movement, the State-created frivolities of society—all these have contributed to the gloom of the

mental atmosphere, until to-day pessimism may be said to be the normal condition of all Russian thought."

And this quality is a strong characteristic of the Russian literature that is now fast coming to the knowledge of the world through translations. When Pushkin heard Gogol's masterpiece, "Dead Souls," read to him, he burst into tears and exclaimed, "It is the picture of the universal platitude of the country—the sad thing, our poor Russia!" *

But the difference in the amount of mental activity is the striking fact. Scotland, with her 3,500,000 inhabitants and 31,000 square miles, has produced twenty times as many men of eminence in art and literature as Russia with her 100,000,000 inhabitants and 2,000,000 square miles. This, it may be said, is not because the one country is mountainous and picturesque, the other flat and dull; but because the one is free and the other

* If the reader wishes to know something of Russia and its people, let him read the astounding but evidently true description given in the work entitled, "Russian Traits and Terrors," by E. B. Lannin, which is the collective signature of several writers in the Fortnightly Review. The Russians of to-day are so low and debased in character that not one in a hundred ever attempts to speak the truth; not one in a thousand dares to say a word against the daily atrocities committed by the authorities; and the great mass of the people are hopelessly sunk in sloth, poverty, immorality, and intellectual slavery. "The extent to which fatalism and shiftlessness," says this author, "with all the other vices of which they are the source, have eaten into the Russian character, can with difficulty be realized by those whose knowledge of the people is not derived from personal experience. Even in things that interest him most, the typical Russian is strangely apathetic, and the terribly significant expression, 'I waved my hand at it,' meaning, 'I have given up all further thought of it,' is daily and hourly heard from men who, at the first little obstacle they en-

enslaved. But what made the one free and the other enslaved? Is it not because mountain fastnesses inspire courage, create a spirit of independence, a defiance of danger, and a love of freedom? Is it not because a flat country produces an indifference to liberty, and a dread of resisting tyranny? Is it not because a mountainous country breeds a strong, hardy race, sound in wind and limb, and noted for manly thinking and manly feeling? The mountaineer is accustomed from earliest youth to face danger and difficulty; to look upon dizzy precipices and overhanging rocks without fear; to encounter fierce storms and roaring torrents without flinching;—while the inhabitant of the plain, living always on a level surface, where nothing hazardous is ever required of him, is seldom or never required to exert great energy of body or mind, and remains an undeveloped creature to the end of the chapter: his environment engenders timidity

counter, withdraw from the race within easy distance of the goal. . . . This combination of fatalism, will paralysis, indifference, and grovelling instincts gives us a clew to the marvellous endurance of the masses, whose mode of life is at times more bleak, cheerless, and less human than that of the grass-eating monks of Mesopotamia described by Lozomen, whose sufferings were at least the result of choice. For ages they have been taught by word of mouth and by the lessons of daily experience to take no thought for the morrow; they have been trained by the government and counselled by the church to look to others for all things needful, to put their trust in princes and powers, visible and invisible; and the outcome of this habit is on the one hand a degree of shiftlessness compared with which Mr. Micawber's waiting for something to turn up is sublimated worldly wisdom; and on the other hand a lively expectation of daily miracles in which the most spoiled miracle-worker of the Middle Ages never ventured to indulge." So much for a country whose chief physical features are plains, ponds, and puddles.

and a submissive compliance with all that his superiors may require, and one tyrant may hold him and his entire race in abject subjection.

It was our own New Englanders, notably the Green Mountain Boys, who were among the first and foremost in resisting British aggression in this country; and they have, all along the line, since the foundation of the Republic, been the chief defenders of its laws and liberties. Who did so much to establish the Republic as Adams, Otis, Warren, and Franklin? Who did so much in resisting the encroachments of the Slave Power as Phillips, Parker, Garrison, Sumner, Channing, and Greeley? What Southerners or Westerners did so much for liberty as these giant New Englanders? If you look over a history of eminent Americans, you will find that the ablest among them, as well as the greatest number, sprang from the rock-bound and mountainous coasts of New England; you will find that the greatest of our orators, poets, preachers, artists, inventors, hail from Yankeeland. There has recently been published a little book in which the author gives an account of no fewer than one hundred and ninety-one eminent men and women, artists, orators, poets and prose-writers, who were born or who lived, spoke and wrote within the borders of Essex County, Massachusetts. What flat region can show a record like that?

You will find few hailing from the dead-level prairies of the West, and still fewer from the low-lying regions of the South. Most of the Southern States, where negro slavery took such firm root and flourished so long; where culture among the common people has ever been at the lowest ebb, and where brutal sentiments and brutal actions have long held sway, lie in the low plain

of the Mississippi Valley and in the swampy region of the Gulf, and have little to recommend them, in the way of scenery, beyond their rice-bearing swamps, their cotton-growing plains, and their oozy cane-growing plantations.

Who ever heard of a flat country breeding a race of bards and warriors such as Wales and Scotland have bred? Who ever heard of a mountainous country breeding a race of slaves, such as Russia has bred? What a different history would have been that of Ireland had her territory been as mountainous as that of Wales or Scotland! Neither the Romans nor the Danes, the Saxons nor the Normans, were ever able to conquer Scotland, whose inhabitants were as unsubduable as the falcon and the eagle of their mountain fastnesses. The people of such a country are moulded by the elements and the objects that surround them; their souls are in unison with their everlasting hills, their roaring cataracts, and their vast precipices; and they are determined to be

> Free as the torrents that leap their rocks
> And plough their valleys, without asking leave;
> Or as their peaks, that wear their caps of snow
> In very presence of the regal sun! *

* A writer in Lippincott's Magazine for September, 1885, speaking of the influences contributed by foreign nations to form the American character, makes the following remarkable statement: "Scotland's contribution to our foreign-born population is given in the census as 170,136, or two and a half per cent. of the whole population. This relative strength is absurdly out of proportion to the figure which that nationality cuts in the Annals of the Union. No other country has given us relatively—positively, might almost be said—such an array of leading names. Among statesmen, there are Henry, Monroe, Madison, Hamilton, Jackson,

Taylor, Buchanan, Calhoun, Polk, Douglas, Houston, Breckenridge, Randolph, Beck; among soldiers, Scott, Grant, McClellan, Stirling, Mercer, Macomb, St. Clair, Stonewall Jackson, Sydney Johnston and J. E. Johnston; and in our slender naval register, Paul Jones, Stewart, and Macdonough—all of Scottish lineage, and exemplifying generally in their careers that combination of common sense, intense conviction, and dogged obstinacy which is usually ascribed to the race." How largely this list might be increased if we picked out those Americans of Scottish lineage who have distinguished themselves in literature, art, and science! "In nothing has this small country," says Dr. Halsey, "been more pre-eminently distinguished than in that brilliant galaxy of authorship which stretches its starry belt across the whole literary firmament. In every department of literature, science, art, invention, philosophy, her writers have risen to the first rank, and sent their influence to the ends of the earth." That tremendous energy, which the Scots formerly spent in feats of war, they have now turned into the pursuits of peace, and won thereby far nobler victories than they ever gained in war. Curran, in his famous defence of Rowan, speaks of Scotland as a "nation cast in the happy medium between submissive poverty and pampered wealth—cool and ardent, adventurous and persevering, winging her eagle flight against the blaze of every science, with an eye that never winks, and a wing that never tires; crowned as she is with the spoils of every art, and decked with the wealth of every muse, from the deep and scrutinizing researches of her Hume to the sweet and simple, but not less sublime and pathetic, morality of her Burns." No wonder Scotchmen are proud of their country.

Let me say a word here about Celtic literature. When Tom Moore, who wrote a history of Ireland, saw on the tables of the historian of Celtic literature great manuscript books, containing long poems and histories in the Erse or Gaelic language, not one word of which did he understand, he exclaimed, "I never should have written a history of Ireland—I knew nothing about it." It is remarkable how few, even among men of letters, are aware of the extraordinary intellectual activity of the ancient inhabitants of Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and of the great quantity of liter-

ature composed by them. There are still in existence, in various European libraries, scores of thick volumes of tales and poems in the ancient Celtic language, some of which date as far back as the fifth century, and some as late as the fourteenth. From what I have been able to learn, much of this literature, which is probably but a tithe of the original quantity, has great merit and is worthy of being studied. (See art. *Celtic Literature*, in Ency. Britannica, also John Cameron's *Essay on Celtic Literature*.) It is from this treasure-house of legendary lore that Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and many others, drew the original materials of their imperishable works.

Although a great deal of Ossian's poetry was undoubtedly composed by Macpherson himself, it is now conceded that he found a considerable part of it among the inhabitants of the Highlands of Scotland, and worked it all up into one continuous poem. Many volumes of such poetry have since been collected and published by the Highland and other societies; and the whole Ossianic controversy, with the researches consequent upon it, has revealed to us what fine feelings and thoughts, what a vigorous intellectual life, existed among the ancient inhabitants of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. When, for instance, these Highland "barbarians" used to meet for social amusement, every one present was accustomed to sing a song, recite a poem, extemporize a rhapsody, or recount the genealogy of some well-known chieftain. Rhyme was first used, not by the Greeks and Romans, who knew nothing of it, but by the Celts, who were the first authors of poems in rhyming and alliterative verse. "If I were asked," says Matthew Arnold, "where English poetry got these three things: its turn for style; its turn for melancholy; and its turn for natural magic, for catching and rendering the charms of nature, I would answer, with much doubt, that it got much of its turn for style from a Celtic source; with less doubt, that it got much of its melancholy from a Celtic source; and with no doubt at all, that from a Celtic source it got nearly all its natural magic. Celtic poetry seems to make up in this way for being unable to master the world and give an adequate interpretation of it, by throwing all its forces into style; by bending language at any rate to its will, and expressing the ideas it has with unsurpassable

intensity, elevation, and effect. The Celt's quick feeling for what is noble and distinguished gave his poetry style; his sensibility and nervous exultation gave it a better gift still—the gift of rendering with wonderful facility the magical charm of nature: the forest solitude, the babbling stream, the internal life of nature, her weird power and fairy charm."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### WHERE DO MEN OF GENIUS COME FROM?

A GERMAN writer, Herr Remenyi, says that most men of genius are born and bred in the country and in small country towns, and that though the city absorbs them and affords them scope for most of their activity, they are nearly all products of the country. "Experience teaches us," says he, "that the great centres of population are marked by a lamentable sterility in the production of men of genius. Precisely as the city, with its one hundred thousand inhabitants, would have to starve if it did not receive its regular supplies of food from the country, so would it suffer intellectual starvation if its mental supplies were not in all essential points provided from the same source. Sometimes we find a miserable, obscure country town producing more men of original power than half a dozen large cities. Everything on which our century prides itself, everything that has made the age what it is, has come from the country. The statesmen and the soldiers, the artists and the inventors, the men of learn-

ing and the men of enterprise, have all migrated from some obscure corner of the land to take possession of the cities, as their barbarous ancestors migrated from savage wildernesses to take possession of the seats of civilization. In Paris, Berlin and Vienna the natives are largely in the minority, and the immigrants fill all the streets and houses, and occupy all the public places. So it is with the leading men and the leading ideas; they all come from the country."

Well, this seems a remarkable statement to make; but I think that his assertion will hold good, not only in Europe, to which his article seems chiefly to refer, but in America. Make out a list of eminent Americans, and you will find that very few of them were born in the cities. How can this be explained? Herr Remenyi has no explanation to offer; he has no theory regarding it. "It has always been so," he says, "and will always be so; the city governs the fashions, but the village governs the nation." I think, however, it can be explained by natural causes.

In the first place, there are in every nation about six times as many people in the country and in country towns as there are in the large cities. This is a very striking fact, of which everybody is not aware. Many city dwellers imagine that the majority of the population of the nation live in the cities, like themselves; for when they go to the country, they see so few people there, it seems hardly populated at all. In the next place, the tendency of talent in every country is toward the city, because, like the cabbages and potatoes, it finds the best market there. The young painter, poet, sculptor, orator or writer naturally gravitates toward those centres where his talent is most valued and

commands the highest reward. If the city dwellers are themselves not so richly endowed with genius, they know best how to appreciate it, and how to pay the best price for it.

In the next place, the inhabitants of cities are so absorbed in multitudinous occupations, in ambitious pursuits and extravagant pleasures; so crazy in the pursuit of wealth, and so cranky in the spending of it; so full of newspaper excitements, and so fond of outside show and glitter; so bent upon picking up a little of everything and much of nothing; so cribbed, cramped, and confined within narrow streets and close rooms; so devoid of inspiring scenery and noble prospects, that it is evident they cannot have the same chance for study, for large mental growth, as those who enjoy the slow, steady, quiet, leisurely life of the country. Their talents are frittered away in the excitements and scrambles of the hour, and seldom does one of them think of becoming anything more than "a clever fellow" or "a good fellow." It is the old story of the slow but steady-going tortoise beating the swift but superficial hare. I know from my own experience that when I was in Paris I found nearly every position of any importance or responsibility filled, not by Parisians, who had too much *amour* and *plaisir* in their heads for business, but by young provincial Germans of good education, whose superior abilities commanded good pay and positions in spite of the prejudices of the French. Genius needs time, pains, patience, to develop. The richest fruits grow in the shade, and the finest talents mature in obscurity.

Lastly, the statement is not universally true; for there are many men of genius, especially among the

poets, who were born and bred in cities. Dante was born and bred in Florence; Lope de Vega in Madrid; Milton and Spenser in London; Voltaire and Molière in Paris; and as to Homer, "Three cities claimed him dead." The city seems indeed more favorable to poetic genius than to any other; for it affords the best field for the observation of man in all ranks and conditions.

It is worthy of note, however, that nearly all our great metropolitan preachers and editors are of provincial origin. Bellows, Beecher, Chapin, Talmage, John Hall, all come from the country; so do Greeley, Bennett, Raymond, Bryant, Watson Webb, Reid, Dana, and Swinton. But there is one editor, perhaps the greatest of modern times, who was born and bred in the great city in which his famous paper is published: I mean John Delane of the London Times. There is a fascination about this man's life—the quiet life of an accomplished gentleman, who wielded more power with his pen than the most war-loving prince ever wielded with his sword—which has always attracted me like a spell. No other life gives one such an idea of princely station among men:

"The Times," says its Paris correspondent, "is every day printed with new type. It employs sixteen shorthand writers in the two houses of parliament, and the telephone is employed for transmitting the 'copy' to the compositor. The editorial work begins about 11 P. M. At that hour the outer sheet, containing the title, advertisements and some lengthy articles, is ready printed, and the editor has given his general orders. He is now conferring with his leader writers, who will shortly retire to their rooms. From 11:30 o'clock the printers' boys will come and fetch the copy every ten

minutes—fancy the strain of writing a leader under the perpetual interruption thus indicated—and it is at once set up by a special staff of compositors assigned to each article. The editor, meanwhile, with his assistant and sub-editors, proceeds to the arrangement and revision of the other matters forming the paper.

"For thirty-two years Mr. John Delane reached his office at 10:30 P. M., and left at 4 A. M., just when the first printed copy issued from the press. About 3 A. M. the maker-up stated the amount of matter, and Mr. Delane, without looking at this mass of 100 columns, indicated from memory what had to be added to or cut out, paragraph by paragraph, and almost line for line. At 4 o'clock he went home, took a light supper, went to bed and arose about noon. He lunched about 1 P. M., dispatched his correspondence, received calls, went out about 4 o'clock for a ride on horseback, stopped at his club, dressed for dinner, dined nine times out of ten at the club in town, took a glance at what there was to see; and, wherever he might be, took leave at a quarter past ten and went to his office. I go into these details," adds the correspondent, "to show at what cost a man can aspire to the honor of editing the Times."

Such are the men that Carlyle refers to when he says that future historians will have far less to say of the *kings* than of the *editors* who lived and labored in the times they describe.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### IDEALS AND HOBBIES.

I SUPPOSE that every youth who has any ideal at all pictures to himself, as within the range of possibility, some charming position in life, some picturesque and lovely situation, in which all his wishes are gratified and all his conceptions of happiness fulfilled. I know that I formed such ideals in my youth. I not only dreamed of attaining a brilliant position, with a commanding influence, but of acquiring a handsome estate, with the most charming surroundings, and with neighbors and acquaintances of the most agreeable character. It all comes back to me like a dream, now that I think of it. There is a handsome chateau, with tower and turrets, situated on a commanding hill, overlooking a noble river, in the midst of a fertile country, surrounded by all manner of trees and beds of flowers and clumps of shrubbery. There is a delightful brook winding and murmuring through the garden, on both sides of which are fruit-trees and rose-bushes filled with singing-birds and sweet-scented flowers. There is a young gentleman walking over the grounds with a handsome lady leaning on his arm; they are enjoying the beautiful scene and conversing in the most cheerful manner. The gentleman stops to give directions in a

kindly voice to the ruddy gardener and the jolly coachman, whom they meet on the grounds. They enter the chateau, which is furnished in the most elegant manner; for there are not only pictures and statues and rare articles of *vertu*, with books and maps and globes; but there is a smoking-room and a billiard-room, a library and a picture-gallery; and there are a number of pleasant people who call to pay their respects to the happy couple. Such was one of my ideals or day-dreams, and I have no doubt that many another, once a youth, will confess that something equally fond and foolish once crossed his mind.

It is marvellous how readily the youthful mind fills up the future with charming prospects without ever dreaming of such things as danger, difficulty, or disappointment. The happy boy has experienced so few of the cares of life and so many of its pleasures, that he naturally looks forward to fewer and fewer cares and more and more pleasures. And it is not until he has got well on in life that the illusion is dispelled. It is well that it is so; for it would not be good for him to know all the trials he has to encounter. It is good for the young man to form beautiful ideals, even if they never be realized; for they keep his mind in a fresh, cheerful, buoyant frame, and fill his life with the sunshine of hope. In fact, the struggle to realize the ideal is generally a source of greater happiness than the realization of it.

"In the lives of all of us," says a writer in Lippincott's Magazine, "there comes that tragic period when we wake up from the golden dreams of youth to the dreary realities of maturity, when the contrast between the *ideal* and the *real* forces itself upon us with keenest irony, and the chill of disenchantment settles upon

heart and brain. The tragedy of this period is intensified a thousandfold to those of us who have looked at life through the medium of books, and taken too seriously the lessons they present. Because men and women are not what we had imagined, our faith in them goes down in black despair; because literature encouraged our delusions, we cast it aside as an unworthy thing. This is the frame of mind in which cynicism is born. This is the frame of mind in which the literature of despair had its origin,—Réné, Werther, Obermann, and Childe Harold."

I knew a young teacher who, entering an academy in a little town not far from the city of New York, fresh from college, was full of sanguine, enthusiastic ideas of the importance and usefulness of his calling; full also of the newest ideas concerning the best ways of teaching, especially German ideas, such as the advocates of "the new education" have lately been promulgating. He entered on his duties with great ardor; he loved his profession, and gradually mastered all its difficulties; and, by dint of hard work and faithful attention to duty, he gained such a reputation, such a degree of esteem, that he won not only honor and emolument, but a recognized position of influence as a teacher of ability and skill. Thus he went on for ten years—ten happy, glorious, useful years; ten years in which he imagined himself one of the greatest men in the town, and dreamt of greater things to come;—when, unfortunately, an enemy appeared; jealousy stirred a man who could not bear to see him so successful; and, by secret whispers and open insinuations, this man gradually undermined his reputation, destroyed his influence, and robbed him of his cheerfulness! This person was one

of the patrons of the institution—a man in every way his inferior—who came into the school, listened to his lessons, gave a false report of them, and turned every thing topsy-turvy. A clique was formed, who spread damaging reports concerning the young man, and operated in such a way as to lead to his resignation, the death of his usefulness, and the ruin of his ideal! He still teaches, successfully enough, in a different sphere; but he tells me himself that those ten years, those ideal years, those happy years, those useful years, he always looks back to as the brightest period of his life, in which the world looked beautiful and promising, and everything was fairer than it has ever been since.

We never, indeed, cease forming ideals; for, as our first rosy and romantic ideals pass away, they are replaced by new and more reasonable or more probable ones, according to our age, culture, and experience. After the dream of boyhood comes that of manhood; and after that of manhood comes that of middle age: for the man of thirty begins to think of different things from the boy of eighteen, and the man of fifty of still different things. The youth who now dreams of glittering position and troops of friends will, ten or fifteen years hence, dream, perhaps, of a quiet home, away from the bustle of business, beside some lovely river, among birds and bees and flowers.

The city clerk, nailed to his desk ten hours a day in a dingy, gas-lit room, dreams of a fine farm away out in Virginia, with a free foot on the green grass and in the open fields; while the hard-worked farmer, on the other hand, who has spent his life in the open air and among green fields, dreams of the city, its crowds of fashionable and well-dressed people; its dramatic and musical

entertainments; its shows and museums and picture-galleries; its pomp, parade, and pageantry. And so, throughout the various situations of life, you will find every one dreaming of something different from what he possesses. Douglas Jerrold, wit, poet, dramatist, used to dream of writing a great prose work on natural philosophy; and Sir Isaac Newton, the greatest of scientific philosophers, used to dream of writing an epic poem.

I know a successful physician who still dreams of a career in legal and political life, whose favorite subject of conversation is forensic oratory and legislative triumphs. I know a hard-worked city editor whose dream is of a quiet home in a country parsonage, close to a neat, ivy-covered church, in which he would discourse to his parishioners of heaven, the loveliness of virtue, and the superiority of country life to that of the city. I know a young clergyman who, though comfortably situated as pastor of a respectable congregation, dreams day and night of becoming professor in a well-endowed college, where he can pursue his favorite studies to his heart's content, and display to the world his learning and ability as an author. I know half a dozen collegians whose darling dream is that of going to Europe and visiting the scenes and shrines made famous by their association with scientists, poets, painters, novelists, artists, men whose works they have studied or whose lives they have read.

Every young man lives, for instance, with an ideal wife, a sort of shadow beauty, who is the perfection of womanhood, all that is graceful, noble, innocent, and beautiful:

> **Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,**
> **Eternal joy, and everlasting love.**

And if he be true to his ideal, he finally marries the woman who comes nearest to it. But when he finds that women are not exactly the angels he imagined them to be, and that married life is not exactly the paradise he supposed it to be, he turns to something else; he forms a new ideal; he will devote his energies to the acquisition of wealth, and plan and build such wondrous structures as were never seen before; or he will become a soldier, and win fame and fortune in the front rank of war; or an orator and statesman, and win a place in the annals of his country; or an artist, and fill the world with pictures of beauty; or a physician, and heal and console suffering humanity; or a clergyman, and lead mankind "from nature up to nature's God." Thus we go on forming ideals to the end of the chapter.

To the man who has acquired wealth, knowledge, or power, there is but one way of making his acquisition a source of happiness to himself and of profit to others: he must follow out his ideal, and strive to realize in manhood what he conceived or dreamt of in boyhood. Youth is the season of noble dreams, the spring and seed-time of life; manhood and mature years the season of fruition, the summer and autumn of life, in which the most worthy conceptions of spring are often brought to perfection. Every successful man, every man who has got beyond the necessity of working for a living, should have a hobby, a pet recreative employment, whereby he attempts to realize some cherished dream, some noble conception of his youth. For he who retires from business with the view of securing happiness in complete inactivity, makes a very grave mistake. The brain that planned and calculated and wrought until it amassed a fortune can find no happiness in enforced

idleness. Its very life depends on activity; and if it have nothing to do, it will turn its energies into dark, discontented, and melancholy channels, which not unfrequently lead to insanity and suicide.

Some years ago there came to New York City, from a busy town on the Hudson River, an elderly gentleman of robust appearance, who, after registering his name and residence at an hotel, went to his room and poisoned himself. He left a letter stating that sleeplessness was the cause of his trouble, and that without sleep he could endure life no longer. It was found that he was a millionaire, a successful manufacturer, who had given up his business to his son, and had retired to enjoy the remainder of his days in peace and quietness. He had all that heart could desire; was still sound in wind and limb; and yet so miserable that he thought nothing but death could relieve him. This man became the prey of the demon of idleness; he perished for want of something to do. How can a man sleep who has done nothing to make him need sleep?

I have heard of a workman who fell fast asleep inside of a huge iron boiler on which a score of men were hammering with all their might. The tired workman, even with such surroundings, can sleep more easily than he who, with nothing to do, lies down

> **In the perfumed chambers of the great,**
> **Under the canopies of costly state,**
> **And lulled with sound of sweetest melody.**

Nature is bound to have her way; where there is great exertion sleep follows, in spite of every impediment, and where there is no exertion sleep is absent, in spite of every allurement.

Some years ago, there lived in a certain town in Ger-

many a wealthy young nobleman, who, after his college course, travelled far and wide; saw, heard, and enjoyed all that wealth could procure; and then returned to his native place to drag out an indolent existence. He soon became tired of life, and wished to get rid of it. One day, some months after his return, he declared to his friend, who was a manufacturer, that he could endure life no longer, and was going to end it that very night. His friend, who was a man of sense and discretion, requested him, as a last favor, to come and see his men at work before committing the fatal act. It was the busy season, and the workmen were employed till late at night. The young nobleman came; and his friend had ordered things so, that, immediately on his entrance, certain workmen seized him, clapped a blouse on him, and compelled him to work like a Trojan. The nobleman, finding remonstrance vain, did as he was bidden; and after toiling until he was tired and hungry, sat down with the others to a lunch of black bread, sausages, and beer. This plain food he ate with an appetite and a relish such as he had never known before, and he saw those around him enjoying it in a similar manner. One workman came up to him and said, "Friend, you see before you the father of five children. I lost three of them at one fell swoop. I was almost crazy; I wished to follow them. But I had to work for the rest, who are dearer to me than life itself; and now, working for them has made life sweet to me." The nobleman heard, saw, and felt. He remembered that he had large estates and many tenants; these tenants were his fellow-men, and he knew that he could do them much good; so he determined to devote his energies to improving his estates and bettering the condition of his tenantry; and he

lived to enjoy happiness and to thank his friend for the ruse by which he had saved him from an ignominious death.

No man is so unfit for retirement and ease as he whose life has been unusually active and daring. When Lord Clive, the hero of a hundred battles, the founder of England's Indian Empire, returned to his native country the possessor of enormous wealth, he tried to live at ease in retirement; but this way of living became insupportable to him, and, falling into fits of melancholy, he put an end to his life with his own hand. It was remarked that Clive was usually dull in conversation, until some great scheme was broached; then he would suddenly brighten up, and take great interest in the conversation. He was formed to plan and execute great schemes, and not to live in idleness. He made a fatal mistake in going into a state of life where there was nothing but trifles to occupy his attention. The worst thing that can happen to a man is to have no more worlds to conquer. When there are no more material worlds, a spiritual, artistic, or literary world should take its place.

**Absence of occupation is not rest;**
**A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed.**

There is another Indian hero, a man of wonderful power and resource, whose career, more marvellous than that of Clive, ended in a useful and consequently happy retirement. I refer to Warren Hastings, who realized in the autumn of life the dream of his youth, and of whose history Macaulay gives such a fascinating account. Hastings came of a once powerful and wealthy family, the Hastings of Daylesford; but civil war and reckless extravagance had ruined the family; their estates had passed to strangers, and Warren him-

self, the last of his race, was left a friendless and penniless orphan. "The daily sight of the lands which his ancestors had possessed," says Macaulay, "and which had passed into the hands of strangers, filled his young brain with fancies and projects. He loved to hear stories of the wealth and greatness of his progenitors—of their splendid housekeeping, their loyalty, and their valor. On one bright summer day, the boy, then just seven years of age, lay on the bank of the rivulet which flows through the old domain of his house to join the Isis. There, as three-score and ten years later he told the tale, rose in his mind a scheme which, through all the turns of his eventful career, he never abandoned. He would recover the estates which belonged to his fathers. He would be Hastings of Daylesford. This purpose, formed in infancy and poverty, grew stronger as his intellect expanded and as his fortune rose. He pursued his plan with that calm but indomitable force of will which was the most striking peculiarity of his character. When, under a tropical sun, he ruled fifty millions of Asiatics, his hopes, amid all the cares of war, finance, and legislation, still pointed to Daylesford; and when his long public life, so singularly checkered with good and evil, with glory and obloquy, had at length closed forever, it was to Daylesford he retired to die." Hastings, after recovering his ancestral estates, devoted himself to their improvement, lived the life of an active country gentleman, amused himself with art, literature, and agriculture, and enjoyed all the blessings of a green old age. Had it not been for the jealousy and consequent treachery of Pitt, he would perhaps have entered the House of Lords and the Ministry, and become as famous in European politics as he had been in those of India.

You will find that most men of eminence have ridden some hobby by way of relaxation. Sir Cornewall Lewis was in the habit of turning to some pet theory in life, government, or education, which he endeavored to establish in an essay or address. On one occasion he asked a certain tradesman for his vote, and on being refused, he turned to the astonished elector and inquired if he "knew of any remarkable case of longevity in the neighborhood." He was at that time endeavoring to prove one of his pet theories on this subject. Professor Wilson used to go off on some wild, wandering highland tour, in which he spoke to nearly everybody he met, and returned refreshed and strengthened for the serious work of life. Voltaire, who used to say that "a sure means of not yielding to the desire to kill one's self is to have always something to do," devoted himself with immense zeal and success to farming and business speculations. Macaulay took to novel-reading and after-dinner talking; Buckle to chess-playing and club conversations; Gladstone to wood-chopping and the study of the Greek classics; and Cavour to agriculture and reviewing books on government and political economy.

Many a man, by giving free play to his inclination in some well-chosen hobby, has discovered where his talent lay, and, dropping the mere bread-winning occupation, found pleasure and profit in that which he loved for its own sake. John Hill Burton was a lawyer, whose hobby was writing essays for the magazines, and he presently found he could make more money by following his hobby than his profession. When he first received a considerable sum of money for a work which, in the composing, had given him nothing but

pleasure, he felt as much surprise and joy as if it were an unexpected legacy. Such has been the experience of many a man who attained eminence in an employment which he first pursued as a hobby. Geology, in which Hugh Miller made such a mark, was his hobby. Astronomy, in which Herschel so greatly distinguished himself, was his hobby. Poetry, in which Halleck earned never-dying fame, was his hobby. And so with many others.

I should like, in conclusion, to warn my young readers against expensive hobbies. Beware of hobbies that take you away from home, that cost much money, and that cause you to neglect your business. Such hobbies, instead of being recreative and refreshing, are wasteful and dangerous. Everything that can be carried on at home or near home—music, drawing, painting, reading, writing, chess, gardening; the study of any art or science; the collection of coins, curiosities, plants, minerals—all these may be profitably pursued as hobbies. But beware of those hobbies which consist in games of chance, in betting on the exploits of men or horses, and such dangerous things. I have a horror, too, of those cruel hobbies that consist in catching and impaling insects for ornamental purposes, or in setting up poor innocent doves to be shot at. This last is simply barbarous. Poor, poor dumb creatures! if they could only speak, what a tale they would tell! They, doubtless, look upon the remorseless wretches that torture and shoot them as we look upon the monsters that crucified Christ.*

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*I am indebted to an article in the New York Tribune for one or two points in this chapter.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### HOW A WORK OF GENIUS ORIGINATES.

MOST men find a fascination in the lives and works of men of genius. Everything pertaining to them, their homes, their habits, their amusements, is read with avidity; and when any trait specially characteristic, any clew to the manner in which they work their wonders, is reported, a feeling of satisfaction, of pleased surprise, is produced, and the mind is relieved from that overstrained feeling of deference with which they are generally regarded. What, for instance, is more interesting than the fact that Dickens wrote his first work, the Pickwick Papers, in response to the request of a publisher who had some comic pictures on hand, which he wished to utilize? or that he drew his own father and mother in Mr. and Mrs. Micawber, and himself in David Copperfield?

We delight to hear anything that brings us nearer to a poet or a painter, a statesman or an orator, just as we delight to get a front seat in the theatre or a good viewing-place in the procession. The mass of the common people will go miles and miles to see a king, a queen, or a president. These are to them the embodiment of greatness and power, and to see them is the event of

their lives. The man of intelligence transfers this feeling to the real kings and queens of society, those who mould the minds, purify the hearts, and delight the souls of mankind.

With this word *genius* there has ever been associated something approaching the supernatural, the divine. The traditions of every country have thrown a mysterious halo around it, and men have regarded those possessing it as persons set apart, entirely different from other people, and living in a higher and purer atmosphere than the rest of mankind. Perhaps nothing can illustrate this feeling better than the story of the Frenchman who, in an ecstasy of admiration for Sir Isaac Newton, inquired "if he ate and drank like other men!" And I have no doubt he was pleased on learning that he not only ate and drank like other men, but loved the society of little children and of animals, and made the most comical mistakes in the affairs of every-day life. "Men who are above others by their talents," says Voltaire, "always come near them by their weaknesses; for why should talents put us above humanity?"

A recent critic, in commenting on Mr. Cross's "Life of George Eliot," declares that the reader of this work will search in vain for any indication of the secret of her inspiration; that nowhere will he find a hint of the manner in which she came to form her masterly creations, or whence she derived her marvellous power of dramatic presentation. This may, in this particular instance, be true, though I doubt it; for everything depends upon the eye that examines the work. But if it is, it simply amounts to an isolated fact; for I think that, from the general mass of biographic details, we may clearly see how a man of genius works his won-

ders; how the poet, painter, or sculptor first conceives his work; how he comes to brood upon it, and form and fashion it; how he recasts and reforms it, and how he finally carries it on to completion. Indeed, I shall, before I am done, give an example from the life of George Eliot herself which will serve this purpose pretty effectually. I shall show that a work of genius, like many other apparently miraculous things, originates in the most simple, easy, and natural manner; that it is, in fact, nothing more than putting into visible or audible shape conceptions, observations, passions, and feelings which most of us experience, with which most of us are familiar, but which few take the trouble to observe, inwardly to digest, and to reproduce in an artistic form. "Genius," says Lessing, "is nature in its highest expression; but genius is always simple."

We have all of us some ideal of life, some shadowy conception of perfect living; we are all subject to moods, to impressions, and to moments of strong emotion and active thinking; we have our periods of elation and of depression, of sad reflection and of joyous feeling; our dreams and visions and fancies, our conceptions of beauty and happiness—most of us have from time to time flashes of light illuminating some mystery of life or indicating how the life of man may be improved, how glorious things may be done, or how some mystery of life may be solved—

> **High instincts, before which our mortal nature**
> **Does tremble like a guilty thing surprised.**

Now it is he who takes advantage of these instincts, moods, impressions, ideals, and flashes of light, who works fervently while under their influence, who produces a work of genius; it is he who, by a sort of in-

stinct, goes to work to fashion or form in some way his heavenly vision, his conception of beauty or greatness, who takes an intense pleasure in it, without any other thought than the hope of communicating pleasure or profit to others by his work, who possesses genius. "Men are possessed of great and divine ideas and sentiments," says Dr. Dewey, "and to paint them, sculpture them, build them in architecture, sing them in music, utter them in eloquent speech, write them in books, in essays, sermons, poems, dramas, fictions, philosophies, histories —this is an irresistible impulse of human nature."

A poet or a painter, for instance, reads a history or a romance, hears a striking story from some passing acquaintance, or undergoes some remarkable experience himself; he is moved by it; it works and ferments in his mind; he reviews the whole scene as it actually occurred, lighted up by the sun of his imagination; he is impelled, like any one who sees or hears a good thing, to communicate it, to tell it, to show it; he must speak, or write, or paint, or sing about it; an overmastering passion takes possession of him; he burns to let others see the heavenly vision he has seen himself; he must give it expression in some way; so he sits down and embalms it in verse or in music, draws it on paper, vivifies it on canvas, models it in clay, or describes it in clear, animating prose.

Cowper reads the news of the sinking of an English man-of-war with eight hundred men, "fast by their native shore;" and he vents his feelings in those splendid lines, "On the loss of the Royal George." Oliver Wendell Holmes hears that because of the unsoundness of some of the timbers of the old battle-ship Constitution, the Government is going to break her up and sell

her for old timber; he is filled with indignation at the thought; and he relieves his mind in that stirring and brilliant lyric, "Old Ironsides." Robert Burns wanders through the haunts of the heroic Bruce, gazes on the field of the battle of Bannockburn; the sight of which recalls deeds that fire him with poetic and patriotic ardor, and he composes without pen or paper those immortal lines which stir the heart like a trumpet, "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled." On another occasion somebody tells him a humorous story about a jolly farmer and his belated homeward ride; the story strikes his fancy, and he composes, in a merry mood, that masterpiece of humorous narrative poetry, "Tam O'Shanter." Wilkie observes before a country inn a group of village statesmen discussing the situation; he is struck by the picturesqueness of the scene, and his artistic eye perceives at once the materials for a picture; so, sketching the group on the spot, he takes it home with him and fills it out at his leisure. This is the origin of his famous picture, "The Politicians." Rogers sees two boys clambering in great glee on the back of a quiet, sensible horse; the scene strikes him as worthy of imitation, and he models the beautiful and pleasing group, "Our Boys." John Gibson, seeing in Rome a girl seizing a child, and, with a sudden wring of the figure over her shoulder, giving it a kiss, finds a model for his "Nymph and Cupid;" and on perceiving a woman skilfully helping her child with foot and hand up to her lap, he forms his "Bacchante and Faun."

Tom Hood perceives a crowd collected on the banks of the Thames, and, coming up, finds that they are gazing at the lifeless body of a beautiful girl, just drawn up out of the water and laid out on the shore. He is

moved to tears by the mournful spectacle, and, divining the history of the unfortunate girl, he goes home, thinking of her sad fate, and unburdens his heart in that most touching poem, "The Bridge of Sighs." At another time he happens to get a glimpse of the miserable lodging of a poor London seamstress, with its wretched occupant plying her needle therein, and he paints the life of the sewing-woman in "The Song of the Shirt." Mr. Whittier reads a few lines in a newspaper describing the heroic conduct of an old woman in a Maryland town, where she held the "Stars and Stripes" flying while the rebels came marching in; and he immortalizes her in "Barbara Frietchie."

Incidents like these, which most people peruse with but little attention, or with but a momentary burst of feeling, appeal so strongly to the heart and mind of the poet that he cannot rest until he has turned them into a work of art. He is not satisfied until he reproduces the incident in some artistic shape: it is a jewel he thinks worth preserving, and his heart burns within him until he has made an appropriate setting for it. The impulse is the same with poet and painter; for "painting is but silent poetry, and poetry eloquent painting." Nearly all Goethe's personal experiences were turned in this way into prose or poetry; and nearly all Wilkie's pictures are representations of scenes in his own personal experience. It is the delight of the poet, the painter, and the novelist to delineate their experiences, their loves and hates, their joys and sorrows, their successes and defeats, each in his own peculiar way; it is their highest pleasure to paint the life of man for the edification or the entertainment of their fellow-men.

Some people imagine they must dwell in historic lo-

calities, amid the memorials of famous men and great events, or surrounded by beautiful scenery, to produce anything worthy of the name of art. Never was a greater mistake. All places are historic to the eye of genius. Every spot of earth on the world's wide surface has probably witnessed some heroic or noble action. The very stones that are dug out of a quarry would, if they could speak, tell tales more wonderful than any that have ever been told. "The author of 'The Scarlet Letter,'" says Mr. Scudder, "did not need to draw his breath of inspiration from any mediæval chronicle, or under the shadow of Strasbourg Cathedral. An old newspaper in the Salem Custom-house was enough for him."

Everything seems to speak to the eye of genius; everything has a history and a tale to tell; everything is an actor, in some way, in the mystic drama of life. "I have often said to myself, on looking at a flower," says Mr. Tyndall, "its message is plain; but the mystery of its existence is not. Can it be that there is no being in existence who knows more about this flower than myself, than such a poor, ignorant creature as I am?" "When I enter a great city by night," says Charles Dickens, "I imagine that every one of those darkly-clustered houses incloses its own secret; that every room in every one of them incloses its own secret, and that every beating heart, in the hundreds of thousands of hearts there, is, in some of its imaginings, a secret to the heart nearest it."

The man of genius is rapid in forming conclusions; he instantly interprets the meaning of a look, a word, a glance; and with mind and eye constantly open, he often seizes at once the significance of some apparently

trifling incident which unfolds a whole history. By a sort of divination he plucks out the heart of your mystery before you are aware. From the merest indications of a truth, he jumps at conclusions, and, like a seer, flashes upon a great discovery by a sudden inspiration. Goethe, while strolling through a cemetery in Venice, came across a skull which lay in his way, and taking it up, he instantly thought, Is not this the complement, the completion of the spinal column? or, in other words, Is not this bony covering of the head an extension and expansion of the bony covering of the spine? And he was right; though the anatomists, the dull dissecters of dead bodies, long ridiculed him for his extravagant idea.

Perhaps the grandest discovery ever made was hit upon in this way; for it was by a sort of inspired guess, a pure flight of the imagination, that Newton first conceived the idea that the heavenly bodies were held in their places by the law of gravitation. He guessed at it long before he was able to prove it. The falling of the apple led him merely into a train of thought; and while he

> **Betook himself to linking**
> **Fancy unto fancy, wondering, fearing, doubting,**
> **Dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before,**

the grand truth flashed upon his mind, and the great mystery of the material universe was solved. It was not till twenty years afterward that he was able to demonstrate the truth of his wonderful conception. "No poet, except Dante and Shakespeare," says Buckle, "ever had an imagination more soaring and more audacious than that possessed by Sir Isaac Newton."

Many other discoveries have been made in the same way. Franklin, while meditating on the causes of na-

tural phenomena, guessed at the cause of thunder and lightning long before he drew electricity from the skies; Copernicus, while studying the heavenly bodies, guessed at the laws governing the solar system long before he was able to prove them; Kepler's three great astronomical laws were simply three happy guesses, which he afterward proved to be truths; and Harvey guessed at the circulation of the blood years before he was able to demonstrate it. It was, doubtless, in this way that Shakespeare, too, in so many different passages, touched upon discoveries made after his time; for how, otherwise, came he to know, before Harvey announced it, that

> **The blood of man,**
> **. . . swift as quicksilver . . . courses through**
> **The natural gates and alleys of the body?**

It was assuredly by seeing things through the eye of the imagination, which is the grandest faculty of the mind, that he perceived this great truth.*

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*** It has struck me that Harvey may possibly have taken a hint from Shakespeare. He first expounded his views in a course of lectures before the College of Physicians in 1616, the very year of Shakespeare's death, though it was not till twelve years afterward that he gave them to the world at large. "Hamlet" was published in 1604. This is another instance of the fact, that great truths are often in the air about the time of their announcement; or, might not Shakespeare have known Harvey, and heard him talk of his theory? Ah! there we enter into that unsatisfactory though fascinating field of conjecture which surrounds our greatest, most loved, and yet least known poet, Shakespeare. I have often thought that some man of genius may, some day, supply from imagination that life of Shakespeare which is now so sadly wanting.**

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE MATERIAL ON WHICH GENIUS WORKS.

"THE reason why so few good books are written," says Walter Bagehot, in his excellent essay on Shakespeare, "is that so few of the writing people *know* anything. In general, an author lives in a room, reads books, cultivates science, becomes acquainted with the style and sentiment of the best authors; but *he is out of the way of employing his own eyes and ears.* He has nothing to hear and nothing to see. His life is a vacuum. The mental habits of Robert Southey, which have been so extensively praised in the public journals, is the type of literary existence; just as the praise bestowed on it shows the admiration excited by it among literary people. He wrote poetry (as if anybody could) before breakfast; he read during breakfast. He wrote history until dinner; he corrected proof-sheets between dinner and tea; he wrote an essay for the Quarterly afterward; and after supper, by way of relaxation, composed 'The Doctor,' a lengthy and elaborate jest. Now what can any one think of such a life—except how clearly it shows that the habits best fitted for communicating information, formed with the

best care and daily regulated by the best motives, are exactly the habits which are likely to afford a man *the least information* to communicate." No wonder that Southey's way of living ended in softening of the brain; and no wonder that nine-tenths of his writings are already softened into oblivion.

To the true artist, all books except the book of the world are but helps to understand this one great book. All book-knowledge simply serves to clarify and enlighten his experience-knowledge. "Not only is man ever interesting to me," says Goethe, "but, properly speaking, he is the only creature that is interesting." The man of science is constantly noticing, examining, and drawing conclusions from what he sees around him. The poet and the novelist should do the same thing. Not only in the affairs of society, in the personages of history, of romance, of the newspapers, but in the shifting scenes of the street and the park, in the church, the theatre, the ferry-boat, the car—everywhere the poet may perceive subjects for his active, shaping brain; everywhere the drama of life is teeming with suggestions to him. By talking with men, and observing their habits, he will find plenty to think about. Far more poems than he can write, far more pictures than he can paint, will be suggested to him.

Walter Scott said he had found "among his poor uneducated neighbors higher sentiments than he had met with anywhere outside of the pages of the Bible;" and Buckle, the historian, who usually travelled in second-class railway carriages, said: "I always talk with the travellers, and often find very intelligent people in these carriages. The first-class travellers are so dull; as soon as you broach a subject they are frightened." Locke

used to say that he had acquired his large stock of knowledge by making a habit of talking to those whom he met on those subjects they knew best.

Remember what Cowper has made of common things. The cricket, the tea-kettle, the sofa, the arm-chair, the postman, were all to him full of poetic suggestion. The postman comes to the door, and instantly he thinks of the joys, sorrows, cares, and griefs this man carries about with him, and all this he expresses in poetic form! Whatever suggests thought is worthy of attention.

The characters of Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot were nearly all people whom they knew personally. Charles Dickens drew his scenes and characters from the London streets, the police courts, the public-houses, and the dwellings of the poor; while Bulwer Lytton drew his from the clubs and the resorts of the nobility and gentry. Charles Reade seems to have found his inspiration, as well as most of his incidents and characters, in the daily newspapers. He used to clip out of them all the homicides, suicides, divorces, elopements, love matches, defalcations, generous donations, and noble or heroic deeds he found therein, and had them carefully arranged, pasted in blank-books, and regularly indexed for future use, so that he could turn to these books for any kind of incident he wanted. This was the treasure-house from which he drew his lifelike tales; the mine in which he found so many veins of pure gold. He took no fewer than six American newspapers, besides a large number of English papers, and he culled something valuable from each of them. But Charles Reade was not without imagination; for all these newspaper stories and incidents were but the bricks of his house, the rough material, out of which

he constructed, by the power of imagination, many a charming tale of fascinating romance.

As the naturalist can reconstruct an extinct animal from a single tooth; as the geologist can, from faded foot-marks upon the disinterred rocks, revivify and describe a whole race of extinct animals; so can the poet or novelist construct, from a single incident, a whole epic or romance. Bulwer Lytton's masterpiece in tragedy, "Richelieu," had its origin in a single episode of love and adventure which he found in a French memoir of the last century. I could not help thinking of this, on reading lately that Monsieur Maspero had found, among the ancient bodies he was exhuming in Egypt, one which, from all indications, was that of a young man of rank *who had been buried alive.* What a blaze this would have excited in the imagination of Bulwer Lytton or Walter Scott!

The story of Shylock and his pound of flesh is contained in a dozen lines; and yet, what a magnificent tragedy, with a cloud of characters and events, Shakespeare built up from it! So with several others of his plays: a few hints were sufficient to enable him to construct a whole drama. Sometimes, like Charles Reade, he found the materials in abundant masses, and then, by a happy transformation of words, by fusing the materials into a more beautiful form, he turned plain prose into the highest poetry. Read "Julius Cæsar," and then turn to the source whence the incidents are derived, North's "Plutarch," and you will find that all the events, many of the thoughts, and not unfrequently the very words, are taken from that famous biographer. And yet what a marvellously beautiful transformation he made of the whole story! How much more real

Brutus and Portia are to us now, than they would be had the poet never revived them! I am always disappointed at the faintness of the characters in history after reading Shakespeare's presentation of them. While Plutarch recounts the lives of the old Roman heroes as men and women who lived long, long ago, since ages "dead and turned to clay," Shakespeare makes them breathe again, speak and move before our eyes, "in their habit as they lived," and invests them with as much life and reality as any person we have ever known. Indeed, all the characters of this great dramatist live and speak to us continually. Time seems only to make them newer, fresher, and more interesting than ever. He found certain men and women in the records of history whose lives and deeds he thought worthy of dramatic presentation, and by the magical power of genius, he revived them, and made them live forever as perpetual examples for the instruction and edification of mankind.*

* For the benefit of those young people who would like to get all the good they can, without any of the evil, from Shakespeare's plays, I should like to recommend the Rev. H. N. Hudson's "School Shakespeare," which contains nearly all of each of the best plays, with excellent elucidations. I have often thought, Would that I had had such an edition in my youth! What an unmixed pleasure it would have been! Old Dr. Ryland once said to young John Jay: "In my youth my imagination was corrupted by evil images, and I shall never get them out of my head till I am under the sod!" There is a whole life-history in that single sentence. It is only fair, however, to state that Shakespeare is purity itself compared with most of the other dramatists of his time.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE ORIGINALITY OF GENIUS.

MANY people imagine that poets, painters, orators, and dramatists are original and peculiar, not only in what they do and say, but in their manner, look, dress, carriage, and general behavior. Well, some of them are all this, and much more; not only long hair, frilled shirts, and knee-breeches are still found among the younger members of this class, but eccentric habits, extravagant pranks, and cranky notions are sometimes met with. Most men of true genius, however, are noted for simplicity of manner, plainness of speech, frankness of dealing, and an utter absence of affectation of any kind. They have, like every man of character, an individuality of their own; but they never put on one that does not belong to them. Simplicity is the highest outcome of genius and culture.

I know that Dr. Johnson said of Burke: "You could not stand with him under an archway while a shower of rain was passing, without discovering that he was an extraordinary man;" but this had reference more to his strong character and fresh thought than to any singularity of manner or speech. That is where men of

genius differ from other men: their talk has something of newness or freshness about it, something of practical value, that is lacking in the talk of ordinary men. Five minutes' talk with a man of this character will sometimes leave a deeper impression and give you more to think about than a life-time with an ordinary man.

Some years ago I was introduced into a club of gentlemen in New York city, composed mostly of men of note in their profession—editors, lawyers, teachers, writers, physicians, merchants, architects, and clergymen—and the first thing that struck me was their simplicity of manner and plainness of speech. Here this truth was plainly demonstrated to me, that true genius and high culture are ever associated with frankness and unpretentiousness. For the first time I saw here men whose names were familiar to me as household words; whose writings and speeches I had known since boyhood; and I was not a little pleased to find them plain and unpretentious men, with a lively interest in everyday affairs, and with dispositions as sweet and sociable as any I had ever known.

After meeting Carlyle, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Landor, Mr. Emerson writes in his journal: "Many things I owe to the sight of these men. I shall judge more justly and less timidly of wise men for evermore. . . . Upon an intelligent man, wholly a stranger to their names, they would make in conversation no deep impression, none of a world-filling fame. They would be remembered as sensible, well-read, earnest men, not more." This is worth knowing. Many people imagine that writers are always talking like a book.

Now, as to *originality*, it is true that all men of genius are more or less original in some way; they all possess

something peculiar to themselves, which nobody else can acquire, and which distinguishes them as individuals. But their originality may consist in a new way of putting things, or in a new and fresh way of looking at things, rather than in any newness or originality of thought. As a matter of fact, there is no such thing in literature as *perfect originality;* for all new thought has nowadays its basis in something uttered before. If you look into the history of civilization, you will find that nearly all the great discoveries, the great advances in knowledge, were, like the great inventions in science, made by different men at different periods of time, each improving on the other, each going a step farther than his predecessor. Vico was the first to show that man's course on earth is orderly, not erratic; then Montesquieu showed that he is governed by natural laws; then Kant showed that the laws of history are to be looked for in the actions of the mass of mankind, and not in those of the individual; and, finally, Buckle showed, or tried to show, that moral laws are dependent on intellectual, and that while there is no end to intellectual truths, moral truths are all known and fixed. And if you look into the history of literature, you will find the same thing, that all our great writers have utilized the labors of their predecessors, and borrowed largely one of another. The man who borrows and improves, or borrows and applies to new issues, is not a plagiarist, but a man of original mind; for this is what our very greatest writers have done.

"Name whom we may," says Mr. Huth, in his "Life of Buckle," "a little consideration will convince us that each has been greatly dependent upon his predecessors. Let us cite the first great poets whose names

occur to us; say Homer, Virgil, Dante, Ariosto, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton. With the exception of the first, who can be left out of account, as we know nothing of his predecessors, it is easy to show their dependence. Dante avows his obligations to Virgil, a poet himself greatly dependent on Homer, and who, in his turn, has inspired most of the heroic poets of the Middle Ages. Ariosto has been greatly indebted to Virgil, to Ovid, and even to Horace. Shakespeare has no original plots. Spenser is deeply indebted to Ariosto, and we find at least one example of a very important idea common both to him and Shakespeare. Milton, too, is a boundless borrower. Indeed, so far does this dependency go, that not a single work of any description can be said to be original in the strict sense of the word. . . . Nor are the prose writers of fiction any more original than the poets. From the earliest times, before stories were committed to writing, their universal origin was in some episode such as a love story or a fight. This was told in various forms, incidents were added, stories divided and mixed, and made new again. Thus Spenser introduced an island full of allegorical personages into his 'Faery Queene,' which was after the fashion of many productions of this period. This again gave birth to Fletcher's 'Purple Island,' which produced Bernard's 'Isle of Man,' from which, in its turn, arose Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' and Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe.'"

Mr. Huth might have gone farther back, and shown that Spenser derived his island notions from the early Celtic legendary tales, in which the Land of Promise is described as an island, with perpetual summer, plants in perennial bloom, and fruits of the richest and rarest quality.

Thus we see that no man, however great his genius, is entirely independent of the rest of mankind, and that no work, however original, is made up of entirely new materials. We are all stepping-stones, one for another. "What can we call our own," says Goethe, "except energy, strength and will? If I could give an account of all I owe to great predecessors and contemporaries, there would remain but a small balance in my favor."

Dr. Johnson used to say that there is no book so poor that it would not be a miracle if wholly made by a single man. "Plato's contemporaries taxed him with plagiarism," says Emerson; "but only the inventor knows how to borrow. When we are praising Plato, it seems we are praising quotations from Solon and Saphron and Philolaus. Be it so. Every book is a quotation; and every house is a quotation out of all forests and mines and stone quarries; and every man is a quotation from all his ancestors." And the same writer says of Plutarch: "In his immense quotations and allusions, we quickly cease to discriminate between what he quotes and what he invents. 'Tis all Plutarch, by right of eminent domain, and all property vests in this emperor."

The author of "Gil Blas" has been charged with plagiarism, because he owed a great deal to some early Spanish romances which he had read; yet, though these romances contained similar scenes and similar names, they had very little of the wit, vivacity and sound sense of "Gil Blas." Le Sage, like a true magician, turned Spanish trinkets into French brilliants. Molière also at first borrowed largely from Italian and Spanish writers, but he soon struck out into fields of his own. After his entrance to the Hôtel de Rambouillet, where

he saw a good deal of the polite world, he wrote his first original and successful play, "Les Précieuses Ridicules;" and then he exclaimed, "I need no longer study classic authors; I have only to study the world about me."

It was Voltaire who, in his "Reign of Louis XIV.," began the now universally followed historical method of subordinating the accounts of kings and queens, battles and sieges, to the history of the people, their progress in the arts and sciences, literature and social manners; and he, probably, got the idea from somebody else. Green's Histories of the English people and Buckle's "History of Civilization" are nothing but amplifications of Voltaire's idea.

Shakespeare had, perhaps, the most original mind the world ever saw; and yet he invented nothing, and created nothing but character. "The greatest of dramatists," says Richard Grant White, "he contributed to the drama nothing but himself; the greatest of poets, he gave to poetry not even a new rhythm or a new stanza; he ran not only in the old road, but in the old ruts." He borrowed so largely and invented so little, that Charles Reade, who said he worked in old stories and appropriated everything, called him "the great Warwickshire thief." Dryden, who saw how much he borrowed, characterized him more justly: "Shakespeare," says he, "invades authors like a monarch; for what would be robbery in others is but conquest in him." This makes him the Alexander of literature; the rest a succession of robber chiefs. Whatever he touched he embellished; whatever he appropriated he improved; whatever he borrowed he rendered forever beautiful. His borrowings are but the

skeletons of his mighty work; for, in touching he revived, and in reviving he breathed immortal life into the old bones of literature. Of what value was the old story of Shylock and his pound of flesh till Shakespeare touched it with his magic pen? Of what use was the old dead-and-buried romance from which he drew "As You Like It," till he put the breath of life into it and made it a joy forever?

Charles Reade knew well, notwithstanding his irreverent epithet, how to appreciate the mighty genius of Shakespeare. "It is wonderful," says he, talking to Mrs. James T. Fields, "to see how genius can borrow. Look at 'The Seven Ages,' as Horace has treated the subject, after his own philosophical manner. How fine! and yet, how unlike Shakespeare, who chose to borrow the subject and make a new thing out of it! Take the scene in 'Macbeth' between Malcolm and Macduff, which Shakespeare gets from Holinshed—a piece of wretched nonsense—and you find that, by the simplest transposition of words, he turns it from wretched prose into the noblest poetry! The scene with the witches, which comes also from Holinshed, is equally wonderful, leaving the prose of Holinshed almost untouched, and yet touched so finely as to transform, not change, it into poetry." Thus we have a fine illustration of Lowell's striking lines:

> **Though old the thought, and oft expressed,**
> **'Tis his at last who says it best!**

Other poets have exhibited this power of turning a bare prose statement into the precious ore of poetry. Milton, on reading in Isaiah that "Lucifer sate on the mount of the congregation over the sides of the north," thus transformed it in his own grand style:

**At length, into the limits of the north**
**They came, and Satan took his royal seat**
**High on a hill, far blazing, as a mount**
**Raised on a mount, with pyramids and towers,**
**From diamond quarries hewn, and rocks of gold,**
**The palace of great Lucifer ; so call**
**That structure in the dialect of men**
**Interpreted, which, not long after, he,**
**Affecting an equality with God,**
**In imitation of that mount whereon**
**Messiah was declared in sight of heaven,**
**The Mountain of the Congregation called, etc.**

"How small the spark," says John Mitford, "that could kindle a poetical flame in the mind of Milton! How quick the apprehension that seized the slightest hint! and how rich and fertile the genius that could so improve what it possessed!"

The great qualities of the mind are perception, comprehension, assimilation and the power of reproduction. Emerson says that every sentence of the Lord's prayer may be found in the Jewish law, and that our Lord simply picked out the grains of gold and left the chaff. If I may be allowed the comparison, so acts every man of genius. Having the power of perceiving the true, the noble, and the beautiful, amid much that is of a different character—and this power comes largely from constant association with all that is noble, true and beautiful in art and literature—he picks out the gems and puts them in a new and more precious setting than they had before. Macaulay had so quick an eye for anything good in thought or fancy, that he would pick out of a book, and retain forever in his memory, what was perhaps the only telling anecdote or well-turned couplet which it contained. In the same manner, Bret

Harte and John Hay, from amidst a great heap of common clay, picked out and held up to the admiration of the world, in prose and poetry, certain "rough diamonds" of the California mines, whose noble traits would never have been noticed or known but for their discriminating eye.

You will sometimes discover that the author of a fine poem has invented neither the subject, the incidents, nor the thoughts thereof; in fact, hardly the language. He has simply put into verse certain words, thoughts and actions of which he was an eye-witness, and his merit lies in the fact that he perceived the scene was worthy of being reproduced, and did reproduce it. Take, for instance, Morris's fine poem, "Woodman, Spare that Tree," and you will find that the whole poem is nothing but a literal transcription or reporting in verse of what had actually occurred in real life. The following letter, written by the poet himself, tells the story:

"Riding out of town a few days ago, in company with a friend, an old gentleman, he invited me to turn down a little romantic woodland pass not far from Bloomingdale. 'Your object?' I inquired. 'Merely to look once more at an old tree planted by my grandfather, long before I was born, under which I used to play when a boy, and where my sisters played with me. There I often listened to the good advice of my parents. Father, mother, sisters—all are gone; nothing but the old tree remains.' And a paleness overspread his fine countenance, while tears came to his eyes. After a moment's pause, he added: 'Don't think me foolish. I don't know how it is: I never ride out but I turn down this lane to look at that old tree. I have a thousand recollections about it, and I always greet it as

a familiar and well-remembered friend.' These words were scarcely uttered when the old gentleman cried out, 'There it is!' Near the tree stood a man with his coat off, sharpening an ax. 'You are not going to cut that tree down, surely?' 'Yes, but I am, though,' said the woodman. 'What for?' inquired the old gentleman, with choking emotion. 'What for? I like that. Well, I will tell you; I want that tree for firewood.' 'What is the tree worth to you for firewood?' 'Why, when down, about ten dollars.' 'Suppose I should give you that sum,' said the old gentleman, 'would you let it stand?' 'Yes.' 'You are sure of that?' 'Positive.' 'Then give me a bond to that effect.' We went into the little cottage in which my companion was born, but which is now occupied by the woodman. I drew up the bond. It was signed, and the money paid over. As we left, the young girl, the daughter of the woodman, assured us that while she lived the tree should not be cut down. These circumstances made a strong impression upon my mind, and furnished me with the materials for the song I send you."

Now if you turn to the poem—you may find it in any school reader—you will perceive that it contains nothing but what is here set down. Does this detract from the merit of the poem or of the poet? Will you say that he displayed no originality or invention? Originality! Why, he displayed a much finer and rarer quality: he displayed *the power of seeing in life what is worthy of reproduction in art*, and *the ability to reproduce it in an artistic form*. That is the power which our best poets, novelists, and dramatists have displayed. They copied from life what ought to be copied; and in reproducing the real they simply idealized what they saw. That is

why the so-called Realists are not men of genius: they have no power of idealization; they copy grossly what ought not to be copied, and disgust us by detailing in a book what we instinctively avoid in life.

John Leech, the caricaturist, usually copied directly from life what was peculiarly startling or interesting. He was sitting beside a friend one day in a London omnibus, when there entered an elderly gentleman in a very peculiar dress and with very marked features. Leech noticed him, and taking out his note-book, he said to his friend, who could hardly refrain from laughing outright at the odd figure, "Just run your eye over that column and see what you make of it." The page was *blank;* but in two minutes there was produced on it the very image and precise expression of the strange gentleman opposite. That gentleman figured in one of Leech's inimitable pictures in the next issue of Punch; but of course the picture had no connection with the individual. Hogarth used to do the same thing; for it is said he would catch a character on his thumb-nail, and keep it for future use.

So with Morris and his poem. He had the eye to recognize a priceless jewel when he saw it, and, picking it up, he polished it, and gave it a setting which will ever command the admiration of mankind. A thousand other men might have witnessed the same scene, and made nothing of it. Probably scores of equally poetical scenes are exhibited every day without anybody noticing them. Multitudes have seen the scenes and heard the stories which Walter Scott saw and heard, without ever thinking of making a poem or a novel of them; and scores have seen such scenes as "a mouse turned out of her house and home by the plough," or "a louse

crawling on a fine lady's bonnet," without ever thinking of turning them to such admirable account as Burns did. Probably ten thousand persons saw and read the story in the Anti-slavery Magazine which gave rise to "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and yet only one eye saw what could be made of it. It was a simple yet touching story of the flight and escape from Kentucky of a slave-mother and her child across the frozen Ohio River into the free Northern States; and this story, so simple and plain, struck the imagination of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe so forcibly, that she evolved a beautiful romance, a living picture of Southern life, from it. This is what I call genius; or, in other words, original power.

Sometimes years elapse between the first impression and the work that rises from it. The impressions of youth are often revived and glorified in manhood or in womanhood. "Adam Bede" rose from a tragic story which the authoress had, in her youth, heard from her aunt. The latter had, with another pious woman, visited an unhappy girl in prison, stayed with her and prayed with her all night, and accompanied her to the place of execution in the morning. "This incident," George Eliot tells us herself, "lay on my mind for years, like a dead germ, apparently, till time had made a nidus in which it could fructify." When she first heard this story, she never imagined she would ever write a novel; indeed, she never thought of novel-writing at all until long after she had begun to write for the press. But when she did think of it, this incident came up, and letting her imagination work on it, she wrote out a story which, fascinating, touching, unique, surpassed in power anything she had before achieved. Her mind was now ripe for this work; she leaned that way; and the inci-

dents and experiences of her early life bloomed and blossomed into imperishable works of fiction.

Genius cannot be forced; time and inclination must have their way. Goethe repeatedly advised Eckermann never to write what other people wanted him to write, but to follow his own inclination, and so he would succeed best. Goethe himself hardly ever mentioned his work to anybody until he had finished it. Sometimes the story which one man of genius will not touch is eagerly seized and utilized by another. "Hawthorne dined one day with Longfellow," says Mr. James T. Fields, "and brought a friend with him from Salem. After dinner the friend said, 'I have been trying to persuade Hawthorne to write a story based upon a legend of Acadia, and still current there; the legend of a girl who, in the dispersion of the Acadians, was separated from her lover, and passed her life in waiting and seeking for him, and only found him dying in a hospital when both were old.' Longfellow wondered that this legend did not strike the fancy of Hawthorne, and he said to him, 'If you have really made up your mind not to use it for a story, will you let me have it for a poem?' To this Hawthorne consented, and promised, moreover, not to treat the subject in prose till Longfellow had seen what he could do with it in verse."

How powerfully this story must have appealed to the heart of the poet to have caused him to make such admirable use of it! That which touched the heart and fired the imagination of the poet was heard with indifference by the novelist. I imagine it depends upon some answering chord in one's own experience, or in one's own nature, whether a story makes a deep or a

slight impression upon the mind. You may be sure that Longfellow did not go to sleep that night until he had sketched the plan of "Evangeline," and unburdened his mind of many of the beautiful thoughts and images conjured up by so touching a story. Many another masterpiece has arisen in the same way. I may mention that Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell" had a similar origin. It was inspired by Goethe's talk after his return from Switzerland.

One word more about originality. If anything is supposed to be original, it is the ten commandments of Moses; and yet recent discoveries show, according to Rawlinson, that "there is a very close agreement between the moral law of the Egyptians and the precepts of the Decalogue." Moses was trained in the learning of the Egyptians, and adopted what was best in it. The Greeks and the Hebrews derived their civilization largely from the Egyptians; the Romans from the Greeks; and modern Europe from all three. And so it has been from the beginning of the world, and so it will be to the end.*

* If any author could read all that has been written, he would find that he had nothing new to communicate. But if he *could* read all, would it be advisable for him to do so, and to refrain from expressing his own thoughts, because others have thought in the same way before him? I think not.

I have lately been reading "The Literary Character," by Disraeli. If I had read this work years ago, I would never have written some of the pages in this book; for Disraeli has expressed my thoughts better than I have myself. The thoughts are, of course, his; but they are mine, too; for I never, to my knowledge, read a line of Disraeli's works before writing these essays; and yet I find I have again and again thought precisely like him. He says himself that men of letters, "living at distant periods, or in remote countries, seem to reappear under another name; and in

this manner there exists in the literary character an eternal transmigration." Did the spirit of Disraeli, unknown to me, animate my pen, while digging in the mine of literary biography? That is, perhaps, a speculation more curious than profitable. What a mine of literary lore there is in his book on the literary character! How many thousand volumes he must have read to write this one! He was, undoubtedly, one of the most indefatigable readers the world ever saw. There is hardly a page in his book in which he does not quote something from, or say something about, four or five different writers. Except Buckle's History of Civilization, I never perused a book displaying such a wide range of reading.

Goethe said that if he had read Shakespeare in his youth, he would never have written a line. Is it not fortunate that he did not read Shakespeare in his youth? I know one fine thinker who is such a devoted admirer of Goethe that he refuses to write anything because Goethe has expressed all his thoughts so much better than he can! Is this wise? Even if most of an author's books contain nothing new, may he not succeed in writing one that is new? And is it not worth writing many works to produce one original work? Goethe is certainly as different from Shakespeare as Molière is from Cervantes, and as Walter Scott is from all four. Nor can any man be an exact fac-simile of another.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### "UNCONSCIOUS EASE" IN LITERARY WORK.

CARLYLE declares that all good literary work is done without effort and with unconscious ease; and yet his own work, though of excellent character, was not done in this way. Whewell asserts that no man ever becomes master of anything until he does it well with unconscious ease. But is not this enviable power attained by those only who have studied much and practiced a good deal? The "Vicar of Wakefield" was written with unconscious ease; but what an amount of labor preceded it! Will any man assert that Goldsmith could have written this story when he began the trade of authorship? Carlyle himself is known to have corrected and recorrected, erased and interlined his work so much, that he was the terror of the compositors who set it up. One man, who had worked and worried over his manuscript in Edinburgh, fled in dismay from his "case" in London on finding he had the same author's manuscript to set up there!

At what stage does a dancer perform his work well and with unconscious ease? Is it not after much study and long practice? And is it not the same with a

pianist or a violinist? So with authors; most of whom never, any more than dancers and violinists, succeed in doing good work without much pains and repeated effort.

"The art of composition is of such slow attainment," says Isaac Disraeli, "that a man of genius, late in life, may discover how its secret conceals itself in the habit; how discipline consists in exercise; how perfection comes from experience; and how unity is the last effort of judgment." Two striking examples of this truth are presented in the experience of Fox and Curran. Fox was so fastidious in composition that, in an attempt to write a history of England, he could compose only half a dozen chapters in as many years; while Curran, in an attempt to give an account of his own life, found composition so tame, cold, and uninspiring that he abandoned it in despair. These men were accustomed to speaking, not writing; and they found that the two things were by no means the same. "By a long habit of writing," says Goldsmith, "one acquires a justness of thinking and a mastery of manner which holiday writers vainly attempt to equal." And Voltaire speaks of that daily habit of composition which gives one ease of expression and perfection of style.

It is true that many men of genius have produced their best work with little effort; and it is also true that those writings which were least esteemed by their authors were sometimes most highly esteemed by the public. But men of genius are not the best judges of their own work. They naturally consider those which cost them most labor their best, and those which cost them least their worst, which is not always the case. Southey's long and elaborate poems about the Moors,

now forgotten, were considered by him his best work; while his little accidental pieces, now found in every school-reader, he considered of little value. And Charles Mackay complained that while his easily-written ballads "earned the acclamation of the million, his conscientious labors of years were welcomed only by the choice few." But while his ballads were inspirations, his "conscientious labors" were mental elaborations. The former were composed with unconscious effort, the latter with conscious or conscientious effort.

Yet the question is, would he ever have done anything at all with unconscious effort, had he not done much with conscious effort? I think he would not. Everybody knows that many great orators were at first exceedingly "conscious" in their efforts; while at last they spoke admirably and eloquently with unconscious ease. So it must be with the poets and with all other artists. Practice makes perfect. Fox turned the House of Commons into a debating club to perfect himself as a speaker; and Curran practiced incessantly at debating societies until he could speak as easily before judge and jury as before a group of college students. Had they practiced thus in composition, they would have written as well as they spoke. Their brilliant flashes, like those of all great orators, were entirely unpremeditated; but these flashes would never, without their premeditated efforts, have come at all.

The reason why the million so highly appreciate unconscious efforts is because those thoughts that come easily into the mind and are uttered easily enter the minds of others easily, and are readily apprehended and appreciated. Labored, logical productions need something of labor and logic to understand them; and these

are not for the million. Mackay's ballads were written when the author's soul was agitated with the burning questions of the hour, aflame with the same desires and aspirations as the multitude around him; and by giving *expression* to what they could only *feel*, he instantly won their approbation and applause.

All great thoughts are in the hearts of the million, and it is the office of the poet to give expression to them. Buckle declares that all great reformers are merely the mouthpieces of the masses, the exponents of their thoughts, feelings and aspirations. So with the poet. He simply tells people what they knew before, but could not so well express. What did Burns do but voice the thoughts and feelings of the "mute, inglorious Miltons" around him? and what did Shakespeare do but reflect the great age in which he lived? How could he otherwise have been so highly appreciated, so popular, even in his own day? It is not the thoughts of the million that are vulgar; it is only their language, their dialect; and this is because they are not trained to speak or write. Those who are trained express thoughts that are common to many in a style which is attainable by few: that is all.

When an enemy of Voltaire said that he was the very first man in the world at writing down what other people thought, John Morley remarked, that "this assertion, which was meant for a spiteful censure, was in fact a truly honorable distinction." So with all those who have uttered what the million have endorsed. Patrick Henry, in his famous speech against George the Third, and Daniel Webster, in his splendid reply to Hayne, simply expressed what millions of their countrymen were then thinking. So with Lincoln's speech at Gettys-

burg. He jotted down on the back of an envelope the thoughts that came to him on the way, thoughts such as most men were thinking that day; and these, which cost him no labor, and came easily, met with swifter appreciation and wider popularity than anything else he ever uttered. They were things that everybody thought, but which he alone could express.

A light song, a brief poem, or a short story is sometimes the only thing that carries to posterity the name of a voluminous author; but neither the light song, the brief poem, nor the short story would ever have been written had the author not done much work beforehand. Wolfe wrote many things besides the "Burial of Sir John Moore;" Gray many things besides the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard;" Defoe many things besides "Robinson Crusoe;" but these alone have won the applause of the million and kept their names fresh in remembrance. Bret Harte's "Heathen Chinee"—a light squib struck off with unconscious ease in a moment of whimsical fancy—has procured him more fame than all his other writings put together. Who has read anything of John Howard Payne's writings besides his "Home, Sweet Home?" or of Woodworth's besides his "Old Oaken Bucket?" Savage survives in a single couplet (from "The Bastard"):

> **He lives to build, not boast, a race;**
> **No tenth transmitter of a foolish face:**

and Madame Roland in a single sentence, her very last, uttered with unconscious ease as she gazed at the figure of Liberty on the scaffold: "O Liberty! what crimes have been committed in thy name!" But what piles of other works were composed by these authors!

The works of "unconscious ease" are the products of

those supreme moments, among practiced writers and speakers, when, animated by the events of the day, or by the feelings of those around them, they give voice to those "thoughts that breathe and words that burn" which cry for utterance. They are moved by that spirit of inspiration which is generally regarded as divine, and which, as I said before, never comes to the idle or the indolent. Pinckney's famous saying (which voiced perfectly the sentiments of his countrymen), "Millions for defence, but not one cent for tribute!" was wrung from him in a moment of high-strung feeling, when foreign tyrants threatened insult to his country, whose honor and majesty he represented in his single person. Could he have uttered such a sentence had he not been a practiced speaker? Could a farmer, a trader, or a manufacturer have said such a thing?

This, therefore, is certain, that those who were occasionally inspired wrote a good deal and spoke a good deal before they uttered an inspired sentence or produced an inspired work. We all have our inspirations; but we must watch for them, and make the most of them when they come. "We should especially wait and watch for those precious moments," says Mr. Whipple, "not common to the most beautifully endowed natures, but coming at intervals to all, when heaven seems graciously opened to our minds: when, through inlets of inspiration suddenly opened, stream thoughts and sentiments which, for the time, make existence ecstacy. 'Hold,' says an Eastern proverb, 'all thy skirts extended wide when heaven is raining gold!'"

How often we see men of letters passing days and

weeks unable to write a line! With them, as with less gifted mortals, it is only when they are in the vein that thought and speech come easily. "A man of genius," says John Foster, "may sometimes suffer a miserable sterility; but at other times he will feel himself the magician of thought: luminous ideas will dart from his intellectual firmament, just as if the stars were falling around him." These are the inspired moments.

Those who write poetry whenever they want to, seldom produce anything that lasts. Bayard Taylor, like Southey, had an astonishing facility at versification; but what has he produced that has earned the "acclamation of the million?" In his letters he speaks of writing poems like other articles, so many this week, so many next month; and he seems to have selected the name and subject of many of his poems long before writing a line of them. How different from Goethe, who never mentioned any poem he had in hand until he had finished it! Such poems as Taylor's have nothing of that touch which "makes the whole world kin." They may instruct, but do not move. A great poet sets down his thoughts before selecting a heading for them. Macaulay laid down a rule for himself which worked well, and is worthy of imitation. "I attribute much of the success which I have had," says he, "to my writing only when I am in the humor, and of stopping as the words and thoughts cease to flow fast. There are few lees in my wine; it is all the cream of the bottle."

Much as I believe in the power of work; much as I think of steady industry, courage and perseverance; I have no sympathy whatever with the Anthony Trollope style of working, with his ten pages a day, or two hundred and fifty words an hour, rain or shine, in the

humor or not in the humor. That is the work of a mechanic, not an artist; and can never be anything more than ordinary piece-work. Every composition, to be of any value, must have a touch of inspiration in it.

Most good writers are, in fact, so possessed by what they have to say, that they are compelled to give expression to their thoughts in order to secure peace of mind. This is their means of getting rid of whatever trouble or agitation possesses them. They feel they have a message to deliver, and cannot rest satisfied until they have delivered it. Some, when composing, are so crowded with ideas that they cannot get them down fast enough, and take to short-hand writing, or making mere signs for their words. This rapid writing of authors is what makes their hand so often undecipherable; it is the *thoughts* they are after, not the *words*, and in their anxiety to get down the thoughts they forget to form words, and make little more than *signs* for them.

Those who can dictate their thoughts have the advantage of giving an easy, talk-like air to them, and of saving themselves much labor. But this needs a full mind, perfect composure, and complete mastery of the subject. Matthew Arnold condemned dictation, as leading to a slovenly and careless style. Yet Scott often dictated his stories to his secretary, and Cobbett dictated nearly all he sent to the press in his later years. Macaulay, however, the great master of style, never dictated. He scored off his first draft at headlong speed, and then copied and polished at leisure.

Many young persons, who are able and willing to write, are afraid to begin because they cannot tell *all* they know of a subject. They feel they cannot give a

perfect picture of it, and hesitate to give an imperfect one. Well, perfection does not come at once; and if you set down honestly what you can about a subject, the reader will not miss what you leave out. For the reader is not likely to know as much about the subject as the writer, and so long as the reader learns what he did not know before, he will not be apt to blame the writer for not telling all he knows.

A young writer for the press, who was asked to give a report of what was said and done at a certain meeting at which he happened to be present, hesitated to do so because he thought he could not give a complete account of it. "You forget," said the editor, "that most of those who will read your report know nothing at all of the matter, and will read what you write as if it were all that took place." One must never forget this. It is not less than what took place, but more, that makes a bad report. No writer is expected to give more than what he remembers, or than what impressed him, in his account of any transaction. I suppose that our Saviour said ten times as much, or a hundred times as much, as his disciples have reported of his sayings; and yet we all read the Gospels as if they contained all he said.

**Our doubts are traitors,**
**And make us lose the good we oft might win,**
**By fearing to attempt.**

## CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW AUTHORS COMPOSE—PECULIAR HABITS.

THE habits of men of genius are as various as their characters. While some dash off their thoughts at headlong speed, and elaborate at leisure, others write slowly, carefully and correctly from the start, and absolutely refuse to meddle with their work afterward. Cobbett was one of these; he did not believe in mending. "Let it go," he says; "no patching, no after-pointing." So also with Thackeray, who wrote slowly, and rarely retouched what he had once written. Shelley used to set down his thoughts roughly at night, and polish them on the following morning. "When my brain gets heated with thought," he says, "it soon boils and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off: but in the morning, when I am cooled down, out of a rude sketch I attempt to make a drawing." Some writers touch and retouch at every reading, while others refuse to do this for fear that elaboration might spoil their work and take away from its freshness. This, however, depends upon the nature of the work. Gray had the "Elegy" fifteen years on the anvil. Pope wrote and rewrote every line of the "Rape of the Lock" twenty times before pub-

lishing it. John Foster wrote and rewrote his essay on "Decision of Character" half a dozen times before it satisfied him. Gibbon tells us himself that he wrote the first chapter of his Roman History twenty times. A short essay on an every-day subject, or a newspaper article, should be dashed off at a heat and never retouched. The thought must be caught while it is living, and when thus set down, it will strike the reader as forcibly as it did the writer. But it is a different thing with a poem, or an essay on an abstract subject.

It is useless to lay down rules. Every man has his peculiarities and predilections; in short, his individuality. The best rule is to follow your own judgment, and do that which you like best and which suits you best. Thus you will come off best. Write only when you are *impelled* to write, when you feel that you have something to say, and would be the better for saying it. And (as some wise critic has said) when you have written any sentence you think particularly fine, be sure to strike it out! It takes a long while before a man learns to discard all fine writing, and to put down only such things as are absolutely profitable or useful.

After mentioning with disapproval Miss Edgeworth's practice of "scribbling first, then submitting her manuscript to her father, and copying and altering many times over, till (if I remember right) no one paragraph of her 'Lenora' stood at last as it did at first," Harriet Martineau says of her own manner of composing: "I found that there was no use in copying if I did not alter; and that, if ever I did alter, I had to change back again; and I, once for all, committed myself to a single copy. It seemed clear to me that distinctness and precision must be lost if alterations

were made in a different state of mind from that which suggested the first utterance; and I was delighted when, long afterwards, I met with Cobbett's advice: to know first what you want to say, and then say it in the first words that occur to you. The excellence of Cobbett's style, and the manifest falling off of Miss Edgeworth's after her father's death (so frankly avowed by herself), were strong confirmations of my own experience. . . . I have always made sure of what I meant to say, and then written it down without care or anxiety—glancing at it again only to see if any words were omitted or repeated, and not altering a single phrase in a whole work."

Cobbett wrote best in the early morning, before anybody else was up; so did Scott; and yet, while Cobbett could compose while his children were raising a tremendous hue and cry around him, Scott could not. Hazlitt was accustomed to stick a wafer on his forehead when he began to compose; and when his housekeeper saw that wafer she did not dare to disturb him, even if a prince called to see him. What were princes to him when he was communing with gods and angels! The physiologists say that the period of greatest mental activity begins two hours after breakfast. I often find it to be two hours after supper. Bulwer Lytton, for one, seems to have believed in the physiologists' doctrine; for he usually did all his literary work in the morning, from ten to one.

From the following beautiful passage from Schopenhauer, it will be easy to see when he composed: "No sooner does evening come and the lights appear, than the understanding, like the eye, sees less clearly. For this reason, morning is the proper time for thought; as,

without any exception, it is propitious to mental and bodily exercise. Morning is the youth of the day. All is then cheerful, fresh and easy; we feel strong, and have all our faculties at command. We are wrong to fritter away the morning in late rising, idle pursuits or chit-chat; we should rather regard it as the quintessence of life, and hold it sacred. Night is the old age of the day; toward evening we are exhausted, disposed to idle talk or amusement. Each day is a little life; each morning a lesser youth; and every night's lying down to sleep a miniature death."

Artists and authors are, of all men, most liable to changes of mood and feeling. These are the things they work in; for their productions are the offspring of mood and feeling, and when these are not favorable, they can do nothing. When Laube, the dramatic poet, had any difficulty in proceeding with one of his compositions, he used to jump into a railway train and ride to some distant town; and while flying over the country at the rate of forty or fifty miles an hour, thoughts and incidents came trooping into his mind, and the scene or act required was produced. When Auber wanted to get into a favorable mood for composition, he saddled his horse and rode out into the forest; and thus, while in body he rode the mundane Pegasus, in spirit he rode the celestial one. I have heard of eloquent preachers who succeeded best in the composition of their sermons while walking from village to village, or while strolling through the streets of a busy city. Whatever stimulates thought is the best preparation. Some writers, like Emerson, seldom have a regular flow or rush of thought; but, watching their inspirations here and there, scofe them down as they come, and afterward

work them up into one harmonious whole. Some, like Charles Reade, go out on adventure in search of scenes and incidents for their stories; but these, when found, are seldom of value. Reade confesses that his best things came unawares or by accident. Bacon has well said, "Those thoughts that come unsought are the most valuable."

Some, again, like Poe, were never so powerfully moved to composition, never rose to such heights of inspiration, as in the presence of calamity. It was while sitting at dead of night, watching by the bedside of his sleeping but fast-failing wife, that the ideas and the lines of the "Raven" came to Poe. Others have had a similar experience: Verdi, for instance. "On one occasion," says Carlo Ceccarelli, "when Verdi was engaged on his masterpiece, 'Il Trovatôre,' he stopped short at the passage of the 'Miserere,' being at a loss to combine notes of sufficient sadness and pathos to express the grief of the prisoner Manrico. Sitting at his piano in the deep stillness of the winter night, his imagination wandered back to the stormy days of his youth, endeavoring to extract from the past a plaint, a groan, like those which escaped from his troubled breast when, forsaken by the world, he saw himself constrained to smother the flame of rising genius. All in vain! One day, at Milan, he was unexpectedly called to the bedside of a dying friend, one of the few who had remained faithful to him alike in adversity and prosperity. Verdi, at the sight of his dying friend, felt a lump rise in his throat; he wanted to weep, but so great was the intensity of his sorrow that not a tear would come to the relief of his anguish. This state of paroxysm could not last. He must give vent to his

grief. In an adjoining room stood a piano. Verdi, under one of those sudden impulses to which men of genius are frequently subject, sat down at the instrument and there and then improvised that sublime 'Miserere' of the 'Trovatore.' The musician had wept! Those of the company who were not already kneeling in the presence of the angel of death, at the sound of those pathetic notes, which seemed like the last sobs of a departed spirit, now prostrated themselves, deeply affected, at the feet of the genius of musical art."

The experience of another divine composer, still more interesting and instructive, is a practical illustration of the saying that "genius is a secret to itself." "When I am, as it were, completely myself, literally alone," writes Mozart, in answer to the inquiries of a friend as to how he composed, "and of good cheer, say travelling in a carriage, or walking after a good meal, or sitting up during the night when I cannot sleep—it is on such occasions that my ideas flow fast and most abundantly. Whence and how they come, I know not; nor can I force them. Those ideas that please me I retain in my memory, and am accustomed (as I am told) to hum them to myself. If I continue in this way, it soon occurs to me how I may turn this or that morceau to account, so as to make a good dish of it. . . . All this fires my soul; and, provided I am not disturbed, my subject enlarges itself, becomes methodized and defined, and the whole, though it be long, stands almost finished and complete in my mind; so that I can survey it at a glance, like a fine picture or a beautiful statue. . . . When I proceed to write down my ideas, I take out of the bag of my memory, if I may use that phrase, what has been previously col-

lected there in the way I have mentioned. For this reason, the committing to paper is easily done; for every scene is, as I said before, already finished, and it rarely differs on paper from what it was in imagination. At this occupation I can, therefore, suffer myself to be disturbed, for whatever may be going on about me I write, and even talk, but only of trifling matters. . . . I really do not study or aim at originality. I should, in fact, not be able to describe in what mine consists, though I think it quite natural that persons who have an individual appearance should also be differently constituted from others, intellectually as well as physically. At least, I know that I have not constituted myself either one way or the other."

Yet Mozart was a great student of the works of other masters; he seems, in fact, to have needed constant study of the works of others to stimulate him to produce work of his own. "It is a very great error," he says, "to suppose that my art has become exceedingly easy to me. I assure you there is scarcely any one who has worked at the study of composition as I have. You could hardly mention any famous composer whose writings I have not diligently and repeatedly studied throughout."

Sir Edwin Arnold thus stated to a correspondent of the New York Herald his method of composing his poetry: "Either I write my thought first and roughly on scraps of paper, or my daughter takes it down from my dictation. She is the only one who can do so for me. While I dictate to her I walk up and down the room and smoke. I put the rough notes in my pocket until the next day. Then I read the verses over and over, correct and copy all out myself, altering it very

much and filling it up. These scraps I enter into a sort of day-book or ledger until the work is nearly finished. I treat the matter thus compiled as a rough draft. I go over it myself, polish it and transcribe it into a second book, which may be called the poem itself, but still in a rough state. Then I copy it out again, and finally in a fair manuscript for the printer. Every line of the poem, therefore, passes through my mind three or four times. Sometimes the lines are importunate and will be at once registered. Reading, smoking, driving, dressing for dinner—it does not matter how I may be engaged—the verses haunt me, dance before my imagination, fascinate me, demanding to be fixed: they must be caught then and there, or they will go. Sometimes the right ideas come as suddenly as if they were electric messages. I have no particular time of day set aside for writing poetry. It is done, as I have said, when the spell is upon me, be it morning, midday, or midnight." This was his method of composing poetry; as for prose, he could compose that at any time as easily as talk.

Alfieri prepared his mind for composition by listening to music. "Almost all my tragedies," he says, "were sketched in my mind either in the act of hearing music or a few hours after." Bossuet, when about to compose a funeral oration, spent several days in the study of Homer. Lord Byron, who did nearly all his writing at night, said, "I never could make much of a subject suggested to me by another." Few authors can. No; an author, like other artists, must, if he would work well and profitably, write on subjects of his own choosing.

Mr. Joseph Jefferson, the veteran actor, has lately

astonished and delighted the world by an admirable autobiography, written in the most charming style. "I have never kept a diary," he said to Frank Carpenter, talking of the way he composed his book, "but wrote practically without notes. I am fortunate in having a good memory. I wrote the entire book from that. I began it about three years ago, and wrote by fits and starts as the humor seized me. It was curious the way my mind worked. I would awake in the middle of the night from a sound sleep for no reason that I could see, and would think of some of my past experiences. If I went to sleep again I would find in the morning that I knew that I had remembered something during the night which I intended to record when I got up, but could not think what that something was. After this I had a pencil and note-book by my bedside, and at such times as I awoke and thought of the matter I would rise and write out the material. In preparing the book finally, I found these memoranda of great value, and perceived that in most cases the first records were better than anything I could write." Mr. Jefferson added that he did not see why an actor should not have a natural bent toward literature, and why he should not write fluently and well. His whole life is made up of the interpretation of literature; he has to appreciate all the phases of thought and expression, and his life is, to a certain extent, a time of education. Yet, remarkable enough, comparatively few professional actors have shown much ability in literary work. I suppose it is only the distinguished actors who attain distinction as writers; and they probably succeed in the one art by the very same means in which they succeed in the other; viz. by taking im-

mense pains to do well whatever they undertake to do. Mr. Jefferson himself is a good example of an actor of this kind.

Let me, in conclusion, lay before the reader a very remarkable thought from a very remarkable man, touching men of genius. Mr. James Parton, writing to me on my theory of Shakespeare portraying himself in one of his own characters, says: "There is a mystery in this thing we call genius, which no one yet understands. How or why it is possible for the weakest and meanest of the human race—say, for example, Lord Byron, or Jean Jacques Rousseau—to produce such striking and powerful literature as they often do, is the greatest puzzle I know of. It has led me to suspect that genius is, as some Frenchman remarked, not a sign of superiority, but of inferiority. The sound, wise, strong, victorious man, whom men lean on, and women justly confide in, who rear good children and found things that bless and endure, are not fluent of speech, and may pass twenty years without saying a 'good thing.'"



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

SOME GREAT ORATORS—THE SECRET OF THEIR POWER.

ORATORY, poetry, painting, music, these are sister arts. That which inspires the orator to eloquence often moves the poet to melodious numbers, the painter to living forms, the composer to melting harmony. Poetry, it is said, is eloquent painting, and painting silent poetry. The presence of danger or the shadow of calamity stirs the soul of the orator as it does that of the poet, and the appeal of Chatham to the Senate, and of Rouget de Lisle (the author of the Marseillaise Hymn) to the people, are born of the same spirit. While the approach of the "king of terrors" moves Verdi to the highest strains of music, the open grave stirs Bossuet and Massillon to the grandest flights of eloquence. Unwonted brilliancy of thought is produced by the most touching or the most threatening of events.

The very first occasions on which the embryo orator is moved to eloquent speech are generally of this nature. It was at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, while menacing clouds were hanging over the rebellious Colonies, that Alexander Hamilton, then a youth of nine-

Mr. Chair-

man," said he, "when I heard the gentleman lay down principles which placed the rioters, incendiaries, and murderers of Alton on a level with the patriots and martyrs of the Revolution, with Hancock and Otis, Quincy and Adams, I thought those pictured lips [pointing to their portraits on the wall] would have broken into voice, and rebuked the recreant American who thus slandered the dead!" This sentence, the key-note to his grand career, announced the birth of an orator that day.

When a generous impulse fills the soul; when one feels a strong desire to denounce a wrong or defend a right; to enlighten the erring or expose the vicious; to applaud the good or condemn the wicked,—he should act on it; he should speak; he should obey the divine Spirit that moves him; else he will forever miss the golden opportunity. For the best things in every speech, as Mr. Higginson says, are always the sudden flashes, the thoughts never dreamt of before.

What gives birth to these flashes? It is the circumstances surrounding the orator: the eager throng; the sympathetic feeling; the inspiration created by the glorious achievements or the dread disasters of the day. These are the things that cause the orator to utter thoughts which, moving or delighting the men of his own generation, resound along the ages, and inspire the souls of every succeeding generation. Let me give an example; let me quote a few sentences from the most eloquent speech of a brilliant orator—sentences which have charmed the minds and touched the hearts of millions since they were uttered, and which will charm and touch millions yet unborn; sentences which, I thank God, may now be applied with equal force and truth to

the United States as to Britain—I mean Curran's famous apotheosis of British law and liberty, in his speech in the Rowan case:

"I speak in the spirit of the British law, which makes liberty commensurate with, and inseparable from, British soil, which proclaims even to the stranger and the sojourner, the moment he sets his foot upon British earth, that the ground upon which he treads is holy, and consecrated by the genius of universal emancipation. No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced—no matter what complexion, incompatible with freedom, an Indian or an African sun may have burned upon him; no matter in what disastrous battle the helm of his liberty may have been cloven down; no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of slavery—the moment he touches the sacred soil of Britain, the altar and the god sink together in the dust; his soul walks abroad in his own majesty; his body swells beyond the measure of his chains, which burst from around him, and he stands redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled by the irresistible genius of universal emancipation!" *

No man can be an orator without a great soul and lofty sentiments; no man can be an orator who does not feel strongly the difference between right and wrong,

* I have said that the orator and the poet are often inspired by the same cause. Compare, for instance, these words of Curran, the orator, with the following words of Cowper, the poet:

"Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free;
They touch our country, and their shackles fall!"

May not the orator have taken a hint from the poet? All men of genius act and react on each other.

justice and injustice. He must be able instantly to attack the one and defend the other. When Barnave, the most finished speaker in the French National Assembly, pronounced one of his studied speeches, he seemed to have the better of Mirabeau; but when Mirabeau, without a moment's preparation, stepped into the tribune, he swept away his opponent's arguments as with a tongue of fire, and the Assembly stood by him as one man. The one was an elocutionist, the other an orator. Barnave was weak in reply, lacking preparation. Mirabeau was greater in unprepared replies than in his first presentations, and his most famous flashes occur in unpremeditated speeches. He had not only a great soul and lofty sentiments, but boundless knowledge and marvellous readiness of speech.

A great orator, like a great poet, when he thus speaks the truth that is in him, touches the noblest chords in the human breast; he causes every hearer to become better or purer for the hearing of his speech. Not only the pulpit orator, but the political, if he be a true man, leads the way to heaven; for all true oratory is an effort to persuade men "to do unto others as they would have others do unto them." Take this passage from a speech of Victor Hugo's—a speech which James Parton characterizes as "the most Christian thing spoken on earth since the dying Christ said, 'They know not what they do'"—and you will acknowledge that no man could hear or read it without feeling the better for it:

"If to kill is a crime, to kill much cannot be an extenuating circumstance. If to steal is a disgrace, to rob a nation cannot be a glory. *Te deums* are of small significance here: homicide is homicide; bloodshed is bloodshed; it alters nothing to call one's self Cæsar or Napo-

leon; in the eyes of the eternal God, a murderer is not changed in character because, instead of a hangman's cap, there is placed upon his head an emperor's crown. Ah, my friends, let us proclaim absolute verities! Let us dishonor war! No; bloody glory does not exist. No; it is not good, and it is not honorable, to make corpses. No, it cannot be that life should travail for death. No, O mothers who surround me, it cannot be that War, the Thief, is to continue to seize and immolate your offspring! No, it cannot be that women are to bear children in anguish; that men are to be born; that communities are to plow and sow; that the peasant is to fertilize the fields, and workmen enrich the cities; that thinkers are to meditate and instructors to teach; that industry is to perform its marvels; that genius is to accomplish its prodigies; that the vast human activity is to multiply, in the presence of the starry heavens, its efforts and creations, in order to produce that frightful international exhibition which is called a field of battle! [The whole audience rises and applauds the speaker.] The true field of battle—behold it! [pointing to the International Exhibition.] That is the true battle-field of the human race, the rendezvous of the masterpieces of human labor, which Paris presents to the world at this moment!"

Victor Hugo was not only a great poet and novelist, but a powerful orator; yet, of all the orators of France, Mirabeau seems to me to have been the most astonishing in feats of pure eloquence. Whenever and wherever he spoke, he carried all before him; on whichever side he fought, victory unfurled her banners. Imagine him standing before the National Assembly when an income-tax of 25 per cent. was proposed; imagine the

deputies receiving the proposition with shouts of derision and laughter; and then observe Mirabeau, who has been patiently waiting with folded arms till he can get a chance to speak, beginning his speech, hushing every voice, commanding rapt attention, winning his audience step by step, and finally ending by securing enthusiastic approval of and an overwhelming majority for the very proposition which they at first laughed to scorn—each deputy voting away, for the good of his country, under the spell of the orator, one-fourth of his own income, as well as that of his constituents! Is there any orator to-day who could do such a thing?

Again, imagine Mirabeau facing that National Assembly when the question came up whether the Assembly or the king was to have the power of declaring war—a question on which the deputies were almost unanimous against the king, and clamorous to have it settled without debate. Observe Mirabeau mounting the tribune amid the jeers and defiant glances of the deputies; and then look at his audience, sixty minutes afterward, eager to vote for the war-power being placed in the hands of the king! Johnson defines oratory as "the power of beating down your adversary's arguments, and putting *better* in their places." That is what Mirabeau did. He was always superior to his adversaries; he could always give better arguments for a proposition than they could against it. Imagine him facing the ferocious Jacobins in their very den, the Jacobin Club: and, amid yells of derision, hatred, and defiance, roaring down all opposition, compelling silence and attention, and finally forcing them to adopt his views by acclamation! If there ever was a man with superhuman power of speech, that man was Mira-

beau; if there ever was an orator of supreme power, it was he. In his public career of twenty-three months he did more work, conceived more statesmanlike measures, and pronounced more eloquent speeches than most other orators in twenty-three years. He was herculean in stature, gigantic in mind, and irresistible in oratorical power.

It may be asked, How is it that Mirabeau, if he were such a great man, made such a miserable end? I answer: Mirabeau was naturally a good man; he had a generous, loving heart, a kind and sympathetic nature; he was faithful to his friends, loving toward his kindred, and honest toward the people; but a vicious education, a tyrannical father, and a heartless wife led him into moral ruin. He was a man of public virtue and private vice; but his vices hurt none but himself.

Let me make a comparison, which will serve, perhaps, better than anything else to explain his last fatal plunge. Lincoln, in the midst of the Civil War, when overwhelmed with care, anxiety, sorrow and apprehension, suddenly bursts into a cabinet meeting with a book of jests in his hand, and begins reading them to the astonished ministers: it was the reaction of the overwrought brain; the leader of a nation at war with herself, seeking relief from the too, too great strain of care, and grasping at anything to help him. So with Mirabeau. The wise counsellor, statesman, orator, guiding the destinies of France in the most tremendous crisis of her history, propounding and defending great measures of relief and defence, warding off threatening disasters, keeping down evil factions and upholding patriotic associations, overwhelmed with

national business, and carrying France, like Hercules, on his shoulders—this man, so situated, without home, wife or child, without that sanctuary to which Burke in the midst of his cares fled for rest, relief and renewed strength, suddenly plunges into a course of the most frivolous and ruinous dissipation, destroys his health, breaks down his constitution, and dies in an agony of pain! Who does not see that this is a case for tears rather than reproaches?

Had Mirabeau lived—had he acted as wisely for himself as he had counselled his nation to act—he would have saved France from the fearful red gulf into which she subsequently plunged, and enrolled his name among the greatest benefactors as well as the greatest orators of his race.*

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*Mirabeau had shown his power before entering the National Assembly. "The persuasive power of eloquence," says Mr. Ballou, "was never better illustrated than in the instance of Mirabeau when he pleaded his own case before a jury. His liaison with the Marchioness de Mounier surpasses, in fact, all stories of romance. Mirabeau induced her to run away with him, for which she was seized and thrown into a convent, while he escaped to Switzerland. His case was, in his absence, brought to trial; he was convicted of contumacy, and sentenced to lose his head. The lady escaped and once more joined him. Together they passed into Holland, where they were a second time arrested, she being again immured in a convent, and he confined in the Castle of Vincennes, where he remained for more than three years. After his liberation, he obtained a new trial, pleaded his own case, and by the impassioned power of his all-commanding eloquence he terrified the court and the prosecutor, melted the audience to tears, obtained a reversal of his sentence, and even threw the whole cost of the suit upon the prosecution."

For a long time I could not understand how it is that many artists, authors, orators and actors are so strongly inclined to wild

and irregular habits. Now I think I know how this happens. Has the reader ever accomplished any difficult task successfully? Has he ever got through triumphantly with something that has cost him much thought, care, study and anxiety? Well, if he has, he will know how it is that the artist or orator, author or actor, when he has accomplished some such feat, in which all his powers have been severely taxed, feels like having a "blow out," something to relieve him from the strain under which he has so long suffered, and to indemnify him for the privations which he has so long endured. Speaking of the short but brilliant career of Artemus Ward, who was very fond of company, Joe Jefferson says, "He had that unfortunate desire for the second round of applause, which is so often fatal to the health and position of an actor." Aye, but there is immense consolation in that second round of applause. Charles Fechter, when the play was over, used to give dramatic impersonations before his brother actors, who could best appreciate them, which were probably finer than any he ever presented on the stage.

Ordinary workmen have seldom or never any such uncommon strain in their occupation as those who work for the public. The mechanic, the salesman, the clerk, the book-keeper, the farmer,—few of those who do routine work ever undergo this strain, and consequently they seldom have the impulse to go on a spree. It is only when they get into some trouble and *tension* with their employers that this happens. Let us, therefore, look with charity and kindness on the artist or orator, actor or author who has this unhappy failing; for he undergoes temptations to which few others are liable.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

KOSSUTH AND GAMBETTA—COLONEL INGERSOLL'S METHOD OF PREPARATION—CONCLUSION.

PERHAPS the most versatile, graceful and captivating orator of modern times is the Hungarian patriot, Louis Kossuth, who is still living, an exile in Turin. When he came to this country, though he spoke in a foreign tongue and to a nation of strangers, he outshone all our orators. By his graceful words he won all hearts, and by the wide scope of his knowledge he astonished all hearers.

"In cities where the vast population went forth to hail him," says Horace Mann, "in academic halls where the cultivation of eloquence and knowledge is made the business of life; in those great gathering-places where the rivers of people have their confluence, Kossuth was addressed by the most eloquent men whom this nation of orators could select. More than five hundred of our select speakers spoke before him that which they had laboriously prepared from history and embellished from the poets, with severe toil, by the long-trimmed lamp; and yet, save in two or three

peculiar cases, his unprepared and improvised replies excelled them all in eloquence, pathos, dignity, and exalted sentiment. For their most profound philosophy, he gave them deeper generalizations; he outcircuited their widest ranges of thought, and in the whole sweep of the horizon revealed glories they had never seen; and while they checked their ambitious flight beneath the sun, he soared into the empyrean, and brought down, for the guidance of men's hearts and deeds, the holy light that shines from the face of God. Though all their splendors were gathered to a focal point, they were outshone by his effulgence. His immortal theme was Liberty—Liberty for the nations, Liberty for the people!"

How came he to acquire such marvellous power? He is a born orator, you will say. Doubtless he is, but this alone will not explain his power. All-embracing knowledge does not come by nature. Perfect mastery of a foreign tongue does not come without effort. The power of suiting his words to all persons, places and times, does not come without study. No; when you examine his life, you will find that his power was the outcome of great natural capacity joined to incessant study and wide experience. A constant and indefatigable student from his earliest years; an advocate at twenty-two; a member of the Legislature at thirty; an editor and public agitator at thirty-five; a political prisoner and dungeon-dweller at thirty-seven; a diligent student of Shakespeare and the Bible during his dungeon years; again, on his release, a tribune of the people; a pleader for popular rights and the emancipation of the serfs; a member of the Hungarian Diet; its chosen leader, advocating with flaming tongue all

that is free and liberal; then Governor of Hungary and Revolutionary Dictator during the great crisis of 1848; finally, the victim of treachery and defeat, a fugitive from his native land, proscribed and hunted down by the most powerful enemies; imprisoned in Turkey, where he had fled for protection, and freed through the intercession of Britain and the United States—these are some of the experiences of the man who charmed British and American audiences as foreigner never charmed them before. He himself describes his life as that of "a tempest-tossed soul, whose eyes have been sharpened by affliction."

Oratory became with him a flaming sword, a weapon by which he hoped to deliver his country from the hated yoke of the oppressor. He had furnished himself with everything that could aid him: he had acquired many languages; had studied the masterpieces of all literature; had stored his mind with the lessons of history; had left nothing undone that could aid or assist him in pleading for his country's freedom. Thus equipped, he was equal to every emergency, and a match for all comers. Take as a specimen of his power his own account, in his Manchester speech, of the way in which his words moved the Hungarian Diet in 1848, when he made his appeal to them for men and arms:

"Reluctant to present the neck of the nation to the deadly stroke which aimed at its very life, and anxious to bear up against the decrees of fate, and manfully to fight the battle of legitimate defence, I appealed to the Diet for means of defence. Scarcely had I spoken the word, scarcely had I asked for support, and added that the defence would require 200,000 men and 80,000,000 florins, when the Spirit of Freedom moved through

the assembly, and nearly four hundred representatives rose as one man, and lifting their right hands toward heaven, solemnly exclaimed, 'We grant it—Freedom or Death!' [The solemnity of gesture and voice with which Kossuth uttered these words, says the reporter, caused a thrill to run through the audience.] Thus they spoke, and there they stood in calm and silent majesty, awaiting what further words might fall from my lips. And for myself, it was my duty to speak; but the grandeur of the moment, and the rushing waves of feeling that came over me, benumbed my tongue, and I was speechless. A burning tear fell from my eyes; a sigh of adoration to the Almighty God fluttered on my lips; and bowing low before the majesty of my people, I left the tribunal silent, speechless, mute. [Kossuth here paused for a few moments, overpowered by his own emotion, which was deeply reciprocated by the audience.] Pardon me, my friends: I was again transported to Hungary; the past came up before me as in a vision, and the shadows of our martyred heroes flitted before my eyes. I heard the millions of my native land shouting once again, 'Freedom or Death!'"

Thus does the orator describe the effect of his own utterances. Apart from the eloquence, apart from the grandeur of sentiment of this speech, let anyone who knows what it is to master a foreign tongue imagine what it must have cost him to speak English thus, and his admiration of the orator will he redoubled by his respect for the scholar.

The most instructive example in the history of oratory—that which most forcibly teaches a young man the true nature of oratory, and the only way to succeed

in winning his case—is the story of how Gambetta made his first successful speech. He was retained to argue a case before a bench of judges. He had prepared his speech with great care; in fact, every sentence in it had been closely studied and committed to memory. The day of trial came; the moment for his opening speech arrived; and he began with a brilliant exordium that drew all eyes toward him. Then he entered upon his main argument in a similarly fine and florid style. The opposing counsel, Dufaure, an able lawyer and astute politician, glanced with an incredulous and half-contemptuous smile at the young advocate; he knew that that style of oratory could not last long, and that, if it did, he had nothing to fear from it. Gambetta began to stumble; his sentences became incoherent; the thread of his argument grew disconnected, confused; and in less than ten minutes he broke down altogether. Dufaure was generous enough to move that the Court postpone the trial until the young advocate could collect his thoughts, which was granted, and Gambetta left the scene of his discomfiture with feelings more easily imagined than described.

On quitting the court-room he was accosted by an old lawyer, his client's attorney, who had watched him narrowly, and who, seeing that there was the making of an orator in him, determined to show him how to succeed.

"Come along with me," said he; "I have a word to say to you. You have oratorical talent; you can become an orator if you will; all you want is to know how to go to work; and this I can tell you. You have language, thought, feeling, gesture; what you want is to be able to use these in the most effective way. Come

along with me; let us go in here; and while I sip my coffee I shall tell you what to do."

Gambetta listened; he had suffered defeat where he had been sure of victory, and he was ready to listen to any suggestion that might enable him to recover lost ground. When they were seated, the old lawyer continued:

"It will never do for you to learn your speeches by heart. Such speeches have no effect, even when they are well delivered. If you mean to persuade men of the correctness of your views, and win your case, you must speak naturally, in your own words, in plain, every-day language, and without any straining after effect. You must look only to the facts and the arguments in the case. Never mind the words; they will take care of themselves; see to it that you have your facts, arguments, points of law, evidence, well in hand, and the rest will follow of itself. Spontaneous, natural utterances have an immediate effect; they please, inform, persuade, instruct, convince; while polished, finely-worded sentences have no other effect than to draw the attention of the audience to the speaker, not to the subject. Just state the case, in plain language, to me, as if you were telling it to a friend. Don't strive for effect. Make it simply clear to me. Speak as if I knew nothing at all about it, and give me a plain statement of the points at issue. Juries want eloquence, because they don't understand law; judges want argument, because this saves them trouble. Then, when you have stated all your arguments, when you have brought all your facts and figures to bear, you may close by appealing to the emotions, to the sense of honor, of justice, of right, of your auditors."

Gambetta saw that this advice was good. He stated the case in the manner required by the old lawyer, and in the course of a few days repeated it in the same way. On the day before the re-opening of the trial the old lawyer said to him: "Now drop the whole subject from your thoughts, and come along with me. We will go to the theatre to-night, and have a little fun. Before being serious, we must be merry; and then we shall make those serious to-morrow who are merry to-day."

The next morning, after a light breakfast, a cigar, and a chat about the news of the day, Gambetta entered court. He was in a cheerful, hopeful frame of mind, and perfectly self-possessed. Dufaure was there, but his presence did not disconcert him. He again began his speech; but this time in a quiet, easy, conversational way, and without aiming at anything else than a clear statement of the facts in the case. He knew his case, and relied on his natural powers to state it. Gradually, as he approached the heart of his subject, he warmed up to his work; the points of law, the arguments, the logic of his position, came out clearly; he gained confidence as he proceeded. He felt that he was now master of his subject, and knew how to handle it. His words came faster and faster; his thoughts and sentiments rose with the occasion. He became eloquent in expression, as well as logical and convincing in argument, and long before the close of his speech it became evident to every listener that he had won his case. Dufaure tried to answer him; but he was unable to remove the impression he had made. The judges decided in Gambetta's favor; his first great triumph was won, and the lesson he learned from the old lawyer was never forgotten.

Brutus and Portia are to us now, than they would be had the poet never revived them! I am always disappointed at the faintness of the characters in history after reading Shakespeare's presentation of them. While Plutarch recounts the lives of the old Roman heroes as men and women who lived long, long ago, since ages "dead and turned to clay," Shakespeare makes them breathe again, speak and move before our eyes, "in their habit as they lived," and invests them with as much life and reality as any person we have ever known. Indeed, all the characters of this great dramatist live and speak to us continually. Time seems only to make them newer, fresher, and more interesting than ever. He found certain men and women in the records of history whose lives and deeds he thought worthy of dramatic presentation, and by the magical power of genius, he revived them, and made them live forever as perpetual examples for the instruction and edification of mankind.*

* For the benefit of those young people who would like to get all the good they can, without any of the evil, from Shakespeare's plays, I should like to recommend the Rev. H. N. Hudson's "School Shakespeare," which contains nearly all of each of the best plays, with excellent elucidations. I have often thought, Would that I had had such an edition in my youth! What an unmixed pleasure it would have been! Old Dr. Ryland once said to young John Jay: "In my youth my imagination was corrupted by evil images, and I shall never get them out of my head till I am under the sod!" There is a whole life-history in that single sentence. It is only fair, however, to state that Shakespeare is purity itself compared with most of the other dramatists of his time.

charm of the orator. Look at the speeches of Colonel Ingersoll, the most effective orator of the day: his utterances are all plain, forcible talk; he tells you in the plainest, openest way just what he thinks and feels; and sometimes, as he goes along, he naturally rises into eloquence. As soon as his feelings are moved he expresses himself in such a way as to move the feelings of others. Chatham's speeches were nothing but a series of broken sentences; but their sincerity, their burning sincerity, carried conviction to every hearer. He did not care for polish; he aimed at conviction, and in his determination to be convincing he was eloquent.

Without this quality, sincerity, no success in any oratorical career, or, indeed, in any intellectual career whatever, is at all possible. The least taint of affectation is fatal to all literary or oratorical effort. How is it that nobody reads Burns's letters, while everybody reads his poems? His letters have something artificial and affected about them; he wrote in a style which was not his own; he did not speak in that way; he imitated the writers of the reign of Queen Anne. His poems, on the other hand, are all his own—thoughts, feelings, language, are all his—he had no models to imitate, and needed none; and thus, the frank, sincere outpourings of his heart, expressed in poetic language, have enraptured the world.

Let the young speaker learn, therefore, to express his own thoughts, his own feelings, his own experiences, in his own way, and never imitate any man's style or manner, nor attempt to appear anything but what he is. Even with faulty grammar and defective pronunciation, the natural speaker is far more effective and pleasing than the most polished artificial orator. Highly spiced

preparations never come up to plain, wholesome food. We feel, in listening to the natural speaker, that he tells us what he knows, what he has seen, felt, or experienced himself, and not what he has read or learned by heart.

I shall never forget the speech of Mr. James Redpath, at a Twilight Club dinner, in which he gave us his recollections and opinions of the great statesmen, editors, and orators whom he had known. While telling us of the simplicity of manner and nobility of character of John Brown, Wendell Phillips, Abraham Lincoln, Horace Greeley, Lloyd Garrison, and others, he himself spoke in an easy, natural, unconventional way, apparently without any effort whatever, and yet with such force and power, that all listened with breathless interest, and you might have heard a pin drop. His description of the life and character of these eloquent men was itself a model of eloquence.

Listen to the way in which the most powerful orator of the day prepares his speeches. Though we do not sympathize with his views, we may learn something from his habits:

"Colonel Ingersoll's method of preparing for a public speech," says a writer in the New York World, "is simple and effective. Many people in the vast audiences who have listened to his flowing eloquence have wondered if his effects were produced entirely upon the spur of the moment, or if his orations were carefully worked up beforehand and then committed to memory. Neither of these theories is entirely correct. Colonel Ingersoll has in his employ a thoroughly efficient stenographer; and when his material for a speech or an extended address is all in hand, he dictates the entire thing

from beginning to end. The stenographer subsequently writes it out upon the type-writer, and it is read over once or twice by Colonel Ingersoll, by which time the thread of the argument is thoroughly fixed in his mind. He then prepares a series of headings of the various points he desires to cover, and when he goes into court or mounts the rostrum he is armed with these headings. He has no need to commit mere words and figures of speech to memory. He has a singular wealth of language in which to clothe his argument, whatever it may be, and his only difficulty is to recall himself to the main track after being led off to one side or the other by the flood of his own eloquence."

I say, therefore, in conclusion, to every young man and woman ambitious of intellectual excellence: Study all you can; learn all you can; see all you can; reflect all you can; practice all you can; do all you can; and then, if you be so disposed, embody your honest thought in some visible form; place it upon paper or upon canvas, draw it, paint it, chisel it, write it, speak it, sing it, build it; express it so that it may be clearly seen, felt, heard, or understood; work out your idea to the best of your ability, whether it be a useful plan or a new invention, a beautiful picture or an epic poem; and if you present your thought in such a clear, strong, telling way that it interests, attracts, and informs those whom you address, you cannot fail to succeed, and your work *may* be the product of what we call genius.

THE END.

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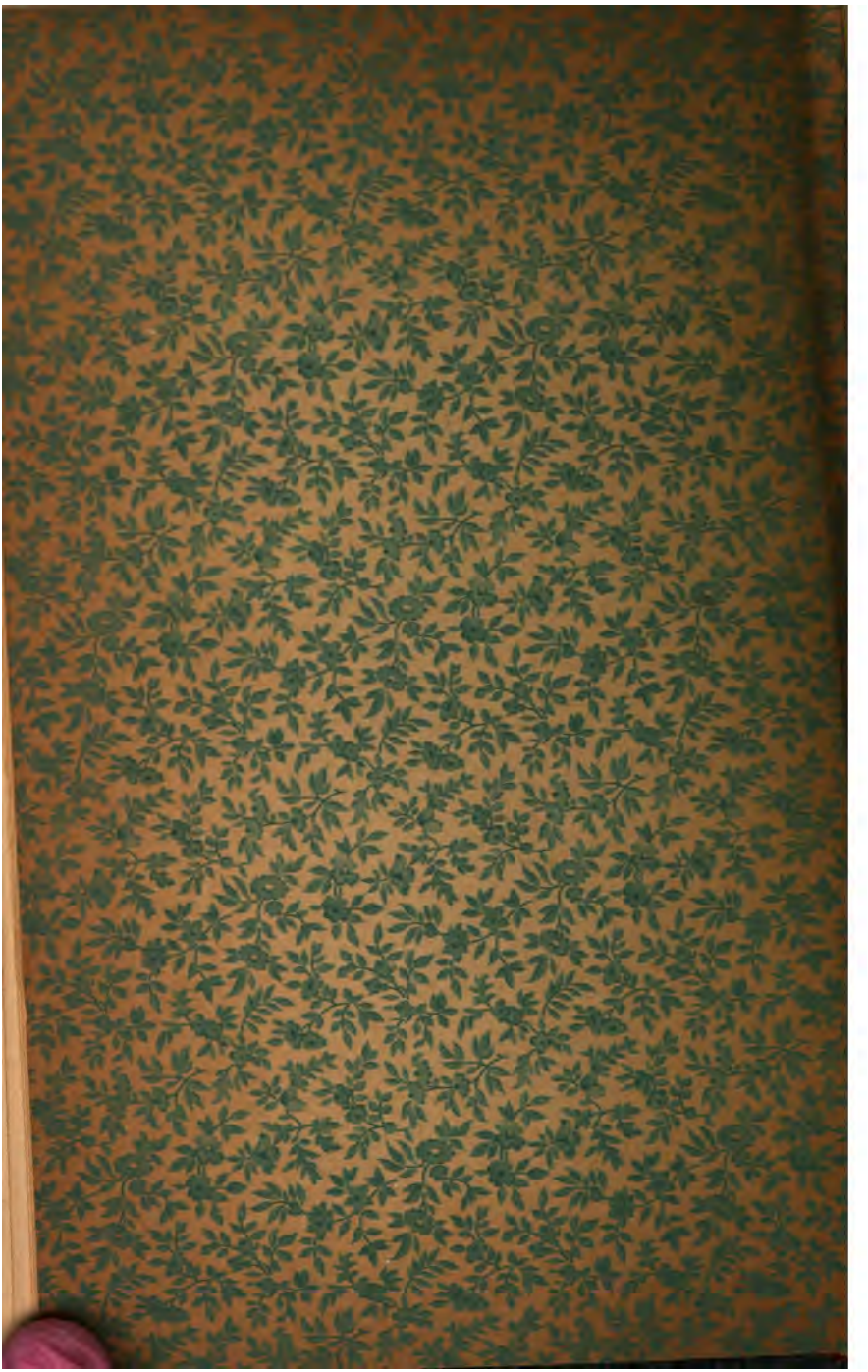
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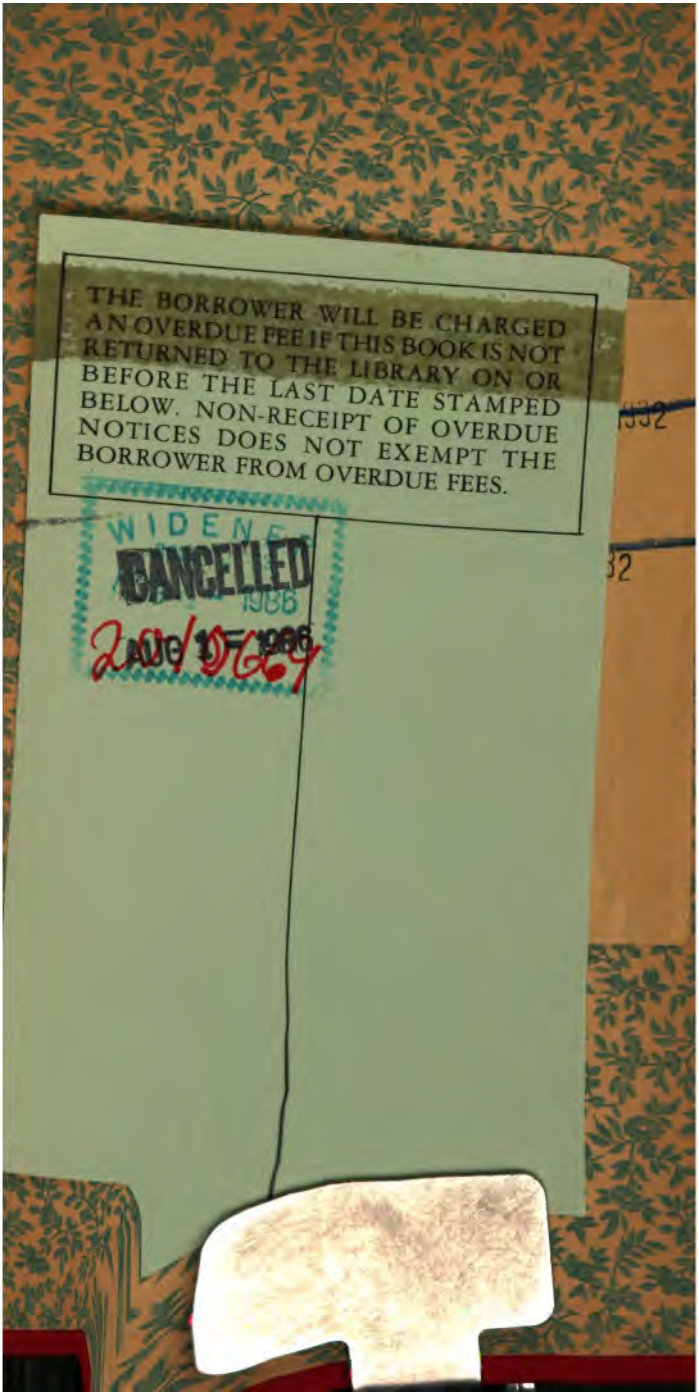
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